

# Dalit Women and Dropout Rates in Collegiate Education



Dalit Women and Dropout Rates  
in Collegiate Education:  
A Study of the Warangal District  
of Andhra Pradesh

By

Silveru Harinath

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**P U B L I S H I N G**

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**This book is dedicated to my Mother**

**(Late) Smt. SILVERU VARAMMA**



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**S. Harinath**

## ABBREVIATIONS

DPEP	District Primary Education Project
ZPHS	Zilla Parishad High School
SSA	Sarva Siksha Abhiyan
RSA	Repressive State Apparatus
ISA	Ideological State Apparatus
ICSSR	Indian Council of Social Science Research
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
EGS	Education Guarantee Scheme
GOI	Government of India
SC	Schedule Caste
ST	Schedule Tribe
OBC	Other Backward Caste
OC	Other Castes
NPE	National Policy on Education
MLC	Member of Legislative Council
MPC	Math's, Physics, Chemistry
BPC	Botany, Zoology, Physics, Chemistry
CEC	Civics, Economics, Commerce
HEC	History, Economics, Commerce
B.Sc	Bachelor of Science
B.Com	Bachelor of Commerce
B.A	Bachelor of Arts
NGO	Non Government Organization
BPL	Below Poverty Line
NSS	National Service Scheme
T L P	Total Literacy Population
T P	Total Population
T L	Total Literacy
L M	Literacy of Male
L F	Literacy of Female



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

“Education is an essential instrument for the emancipation of humankind<sup>1</sup>”. Eminent philosophers of education such as John Dewey and father of sociology Emile Durkheim perceived education as a vehicle for social transformation and as a means of individual and community emancipation. During the colonial and post-independence era, the Indian national leadership acknowledged the critical role of education and gave it utmost importance in the nation-building process. The vision of national leaders is reflected in the Indian constitution, which proclaims compulsory free education for all children up to the age of fourteen.

Although the Indian state proclaims education as a fundamental right for its citizens, almost one third of children of school-going age do not attend school. Sections of Indian society which are not in a position to access even a primary level of education include marginal groups such as women, Adivasis, Dalits, backward classes, minorities and children with disabilities. Dalits are the most deprived section of Indian society, having suffered for centuries from the practice of untouchability, segregation and denial of access to multiple resources including those both economic and cultural.

While statistics show a steady growth in the enrolment of Dalits at levels of education ranging from primary to higher, in the post-independence era, the proportion of Dalit girls in different levels of education is considerably less than that of Dalit boys in general and non-Dalits in particular. The literacy levels of Dalit women are much lower than those of women of the upper and middle classes, and in rural areas very few Dalit women are literate. Despite this, there has been a gradual improvement in the access to higher education by Dalits over the last six decades. Although there has

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<sup>1</sup> Harinath Silveru, (2011), “Rise of Educational Empires in the Era of Globalization: a Case of South Indian State.” *World Academy of Science Engineering and Technology Journal* 55, 924–928.

been an increase in literacy at a societal level, the literacy levels of Dalit women are much lower than those of men across the castes, and education of rural Dalits compares unfavourably with that of their urban counterparts.

Since independence, female education has not experienced a considerable degree of attention from policy makers at the level of national agenda. Committees which have been set up to assess the progress of female education, such as Mahila Samakhyā, and the District Primary Education Project (DPEP) Program, have recommended that, without proper intervention of the state and community, it is very difficult to promote female education and achieve education for all (Nayar 1999).

The failure of the state in promoting literacy and primary education reflects the educational disparities on the basis of ascribed status. The literacy gap is highlighted in the state and national level educational statistics. The gender gap is much higher at the entry level in enrolment in primary and upper primary schools. One of the major factors which determine the future of the education system is maintaining a high retention rate. Unfortunately, the history of education reveals alarming trends in the form of higher dropout rates, which are especially high in rural and urban slum areas.

Gender plays a crucial role in determining the chances of acquiring literacy and attaining higher educational qualifications. Indian society, which is patriarchal in nature, differentiates between people on the basis of gender and discriminates girls and women through its religious and caste agencies. These factors tend to work against the interests and advancement of women in different spheres, particularly education.

Although dropout rates in elementary education have decreased from 85 per cent in 1961 to 58 per cent in 2001, an overview of educational statistics indicates that only four out of every ten girls who enrol at primary school are able to complete the constitutionally mandated years of schooling. But while the dropout rate is very low and gradually decreasing, it remains important to focus attention on the retention of girls in schools. This can be achieved through examining the functionality of schools and colleges in order to ascertain the reasons behind dropout rates (Girls Education Trends and Challenges, 1992).

According to scholars such as Desai (1976), the explanation for the lower enrolment levels of female students is high dropout rates. Desai adds that

the factors which are responsible for higher dropout rates of female students in primary and high school education are largely sociological in nature, and are complemented by political and economic policies. Poverty has an enormous bearing on a girl's chances of schooling when the household income is limited, since boys tend to get preference over girls in terms of education.

The distance from home to school or college is another important deciding factor, since it can often place a girl's safety at risk and cause her to drop out of education, consequently contributing to high dropout rates. Another factor is inflexible school and college hours, which can act as an obstacle to girls –particularly those in rural areas– from attending, especially those whose parents expect support in domestic work even during school and college hours.

Hasan (2004) suggests that a lack of hostel facilities is another contributing factor to the reduced participation of girls in upper primary and high school education. School-related factors –such as the presence or absence of female teachers, toilet facilities, and relevant and gender-sensitive curricula– also play an important role in either motivating or demotivating girls from enrolling and remaining in schools and colleges.

In a UNICEF (2003) trends report on girls' education, it was revealed that almost twice as many girls as boys are pulled out of school, or were never sent to school in the first place, due to the combination of their responsibility of assisting in the household chores, as well as a lack of improved quality and delivery of education. The issue of dropout rates amongst female students is one of the major educational problems which must be confronted by the Indian state in its effort to achieve universal literacy and universal primary education of all of its citizens.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Even after sixty-five years of independence, many girls –particularly those from the Dalit community– still fall under the bracket of illiteracy. This is in spite of state-initiated programmes such as free education for all sanctioned by the Indian government, and prompts several questions as to why illiteracy remains so prevalent.

The literature (for example Shah, 1999), suggests that an explanation for this situation encompasses a range of socio, political, cultural, religious

and economic factors. Although there has been a certain amount of progress evident in primary education, brought about by the initiation and implementation of affirmative programmes by the government, significant progress towards improving education levels in higher education for Dalit girls remains elusive.

Despite the existence of a large body of literature on gender and education which focuses on girls in relation to school education and higher education, it is rare to come across a study which focuses on the intermediate level of education which links school and higher education. In order to fill this gap the present study aims to explore the factors which influence the chances of acquiring collegiate education amongst Dalit girls in rural villages.

### **Rationale of the Topic**

The higher education of women is a fundamental part of achieving the goals of liberty and equality. However, in the context of Indian society there are several factors which tend to hamper the educational achievement of women in general, particularly those of the Dalit community. For example, the literacy rate amongst rural Dalit girls is only 10.93 per cent. There are multiple factors at work here, including socio-cultural, educational, economic and infrastructural. The political goals and policies of the state also have an important bearing on the participation of rural Dalit girls in intermediate education, the stage which links school education and higher education.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The present study proposes to work with the following objectives:

- To analyse the socio-economic profile of Dalit girls who drop out of collegiate education during their course of study;
- To look at the perceptions of Dalit girls and their parents towards the importance of higher education for Dalit women;
- To map out the multiple factors which determine educational achievement and its role in shaping the dropout rates of Dalit girls in collegiate education.



## **Methodology**

The present study uses both primary and secondary data in order to find answers to the research problem. In order to conduct an empirical study, Palakurty Mandal of the Warangal district has been selected in order to identify the dropout rate of Dalit girls from rural villages of this Mandal. Palakurty is a Mandal in the Warangal District of Andhra Pradesh, which has twenty-one villages. According to the 2001 census, the total population of the Mandal is 54,243.

The snowball sampling technique was used to identify respondents from different villages in the Mandal. Personal interviews and group discussions were conducted in order to collect the qualitative data used in this study, and a structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data. For the present study, the researcher has used the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program to quantify data and generate relevant tables.

## **Structure**

This study has been divided into five chapters. The first chapter provides a brief introduction; the second chapter focuses on the literature review, which examines the conceptual works of both Western and Indian scholars on the dimensions of education; and the third chapter provides a detailed description of collegiate education and the socio-economic profile of Dalit women in Palakurty Mandal. The fourth chapter dwells upon the forms of exclusion and patterns of discrimination suffered by Dalit women in collegiate education. The fifth chapter is a conclusion chapter, which presents a summary of the study and outlines its major findings.

## **Self-reflection on fieldwork experiences**

When the researcher first visited Palakurty Mandal, he met some of the elders in the Mandal and explained the purpose of his visit and the work he intended to carry out. He was received in good grace and was provided with accommodation within the Mandal headquarters.

It is important at this juncture to note the difficulties encountered by the researcher in the task of visiting each and every village in order to identify potential respondents and conduct research. One significant problem was that of transport, or lack thereof, which made it difficult for the researcher to visit the villages in question in order to carry out research. This factor

was aggravated by the need to work around the schedules of the respondents, who were engaged during the day in agricultural work, meaning that the researcher often had to conduct his research very early in the morning.

On the first day, on his way to carry out field work, the researcher came across Gudur village. Having encountered some of the village elders, the researcher introduced himself and explained the purpose of his research visit, explaining that he was conducting a survey on the issues behind the dropout rate of Dalit women in collegiate education. The elders then advised that the researcher meet with the president of the village, who in turn introduced him to some of the elders from the Dalit community. The researcher then visited the Dalit Wada, an under-developed area, where he witnessed a lack of awareness about the importance of education within families there.

One of the members whom the researcher met, who works for the M.V. Foundation<sup>2</sup>, proved to be key to this study; they introduced the researcher to a group of girls who had dropped out of intermediate and degree level education, and the researcher was able to arrange a group discussion with them. This was unfortunately hampered by a lack of understanding by the girls' parents of the researcher's work, and their desire for the girls to resume their agricultural work.

Despite this, the researcher succeeded in interviewing nine members during this visit. In almost all of the villages surveyed, the researcher encountered problems from the village elders, parents and the student respondents; for example, from mothers who showed reluctance in allowing the researcher to interact with their young daughters.

Some of the parents inquired as to whether the researcher was going to provide facilities for their children, since they had experienced data gathering of this nature previously and had not seen any tangible results at the grassroots level. It was plain that they expected the research to result in governmental assistance for their children, and the researcher had to explain his role and lack of affiliation to the state bureaucracy or a political party. Having made his position clear, the researcher finally

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<sup>2</sup> The Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya (M. V.) Foundation is an NGO which works for the eradication of child labour. This is achieved in part through the provision of a bridge school and hostel facility which enables students who drop out to continue their education.

achieved a positive response from the parents of the children and the children themselves.

In each and every village there were between four and six Dalit girls who were the first generation to access intermediate education, but were unable to go on to attend higher education. In some of the villages there were no Dalit girls who had managed to access higher education. In one village, Iravenu, the researcher was surprised to learn that within the space of six years; only five Dalit girls had attended school.



# CHAPTER TWO

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The aim of this chapter is to review the existing literature on education, including sociological theories on education. Although substantial research exists on the education of women, no significant work has been carried out on dropout rates among Dalit women in higher education in the state of Andhra Pradesh, and the Warangal District in particular.

A similar lack of research is shown in the area of the growth of education among Dalit women in collegiate education. Some of the published works which exist on this subject are reviewed in this section. The intention of this review is to shed light on sociological theories of education, particularly with respect to Dalit women. Theoretical views on education were reviewed both in the context of the West and India.

### **Theoretical Perspectives on Education**

Sociological perspectives on education focus on the process by which education influences social process and vice-versa. Although the origin of ideas on education can be traceable to the writings of Ancient scholars like Plato and Aristotle, it is Emile Durkheim who laid the foundation for the emergence of sociology of education as a new branch of the study of sociology. After Durkheim, sociology of education drew the attention of many young sociologists, who critically looked at the changing nature of education from various perspectives and whose contribution was immensely helpful for its development.

Education can be viewed as a dynamic process in the sense that the nature, goals and values of an education system undergo considerable changes in accordance with the changing needs of a society. Consequently, education also influences social change. Thus, it becomes very clear that on the one hand, education helps to maintain social order and on the other hand, contributes to social change. Recently the politics of education curriculum, medium of instruction and identity, and so on have become emerging

issues; problems which sociologists have attempted to address by approaching them from various perspectives.

### **Emile Durkheim**

Durkheim's ideas on education primarily focus on the functions of education, which are vital to the survival of society and how the role of education changes in accordance with the transition of society from simple and homogeneous to complex and heterogeneous. The major function of education according to Durkheim is to transmit social values and norms to successive generations. The very survival of society depends upon the degree of social solidarity and collective conscience among its members. It will be achieved only when people share the same values and norms. Here, education imparts these shared values and norms to young children and transmits them from one generation to the next. Education is an agency of socialization which reinforces the homogenizing principles amongst children and makes them adhere to those principles of the society. It instils in the members of a society the feeling of oneness and a sense of belonging.

Durkheim also emphasizes the social character of education. Each one of us has two kinds of character with regards to education—that of the 'individual being' and the 'social being'. The individual being refers to the mental state of each individual and his or her personality and applies to only personal events. But the social being reflects the influence of social practices, moral values and the norms within us. The objective of education is to constitute this social being in all members of the society, which are necessary for the functioning of society. This typifies the social character of education as explained by Durkheim.

A primitive society is characterized by a homogeneous and kinship-based organization. There is an absence of formal education systems in primitive societies. The responsibility of imparting social values and norms to children is vested in family members. These societal values and norms are passed on to young children of the next generation through the socialization process in which they learn and internalize the cultural practices and norms. Here, family is the primary agency of the socialization process in primitive societies.

According to Durkheim, the transition of society from simple to complex corresponds with the increase in a division of labour resulting from the

emergence of specialized occupations. The increased division of labour necessitates the process of imparting skills and technical knowledge demanded by a complex industrial society. The responsibility of imparting education is shifted to schools in the industrial society.

In schools children should learn to co-operate with other members of society, with whom they are unfamiliar. Social solidarity in complex society depends on the interdependence of specialized skills. Schools impart those specialized skills in accordance with the demands of the society. Thus, the role of education also changes according to the changing nature of society and its demands in order to maintain social order.

### **Talcott Parsons**

Talcott Parsons also provides similar ideas to Durkheim. He views the school class as a social system. The family is an agency of primary socialization and later, school takes over as the socialization agency within society. A child's status in a family is determined by birth and is judged in terms of particularistic standards in opposition to universalistic principles. But in a larger society—especially in advanced industrial societies—adult status is one which is achieved and children are judged in accordance with universalistic standards. Schools as a social system reinforce these universalistic principles and make children understand that status is achieved on the basis of merit and of performance. Thus, schools operate on meritocratic principles.

Parsons focuses on the two major functions of the school system. The first function is that of the internalization of commitments and capacities, which are necessary for the future role performance among children. Commitments include both commitment to social values and norms and commitment to specific types of assigned roles within the structure of society. The second major function is the allocation of human resources within the role structure of the adult society.

This role allocation is carried out on the basis of the educational achievement attained by children in their elementary and secondary school education. Merit always comes to the forefront in determining the performance of children and their role allocation in the larger structure of society. Children are also encouraged to strive for higher educational achievement, which determines their status.

Parsons states that value consensus is imperative for a society to survive. Schools in industrial societies socialize children into the basic values of society. The two major values are the value of achievement and that of equality of opportunity. Thus, schools create a value consensus amongst their students, which dictates firstly that different rewards are afforded to different achievements, and also by allowing children to co-operate with each other in different functions as a mechanism for role allocation, they are given equal opportunities. These values create a value consensus among young children and are therefore essential for the functioning of society.

Functionalists are often criticized for their conservative bias, i.e. accepting the established social order as it is without looking at it critically. Durkheim is of the opinion that the norms and values imparted through the education system reflect those of society as a whole. However, conflict theorists maintain that education is used as a mechanism for disseminating dominant ideologies, which will serve the interests of the ruling elite instead of other underprivileged sections of society. Thus, this may provide a different view of the role of education in society. Similarly, Parsons was also criticized for his view that the education system operates as an integrative mechanism of society.

### **Conflictive Perspective**

The conflict perspective holds a view which is completely opposite to the functionalist framework. According to this perspective, there is always a constant conflict between two units of society, as opposed to the functionalist view that the units of society are interrelated. Conflict theorists treat society as a system of equilibrium and divide it into dominant groups and subordinate groups, which are completely opposite to each other. There is always a constant struggle between these two groups. The nature of conflict assumes many positive and negative, talented and manifest, and gradual and violent forms. The conflict theorists are specific in their analysis, focusing on the interrelationship between two or more units within society.

The conflict perspective on education critically looks at the role of education. According to this perspective, education is used as a means to disseminate dominant ideologies, which will help to retain the existing power relation in which subordinate groups are exploited by dominant



elites. It explores the ways by which education serves the interests of dominant groups, which the functionalist misses.

### **Classical Marxism**

Marx did not provide a general theory of sociology of education. However, his theory of state and ideology could be used to formulate the Marxist theory of education. The understanding of these two theories has provided many thinkers with the basis for developing their theories on education. Althusser's concept of educational Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) is an extension of the Marxist theory of the state.

For Marx, the state is an instrument of oppression vested in the hands of ruling class. In capitalist societies, it is used to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie class against the proletariats, in the process of appropriation of surplus value. The state takes the responsibility of providing public education which, Marx believes, will be exploited by the ruling class for satisfying their own interests. Marx is not against public education, but rather education by the state.

He analyses the relationship between the concepts of ideology and consciousness while explaining the concepts of social formation and relations of production. According to Marx, individual consciousness doesn't determine a person's being; rather, it is the social being or the material life conditions which determine the consciousness. So, Marx views ideology as a form of consciousness. The source of ideology does not exist outside the world of conscious subjects, but within their life conditions. Ideology to Marx is the false consciousness of the experiencing individual human subject, since the consciousness is the mere expression of relations of production.

### **Antonio Gramsci**

Gramsci was an Italian scholar of the neo-Marxist school, who greatly contributed to the Marxist theory of education. Hegemony is an important contribution of Gramsci. He points out that in capitalism, the educational institution plays an important role in spreading the ruling class ideology. He adds that in capitalist society only the ruling class or bourgeoisie have the opportunity to avail the education system. The common man has little chance to achieve this access due to poor financial circumstances and a lack of encouragement from the government. This is one of the reasons for

the growing inequality that exists in the capitalist society. Gramsci says that there should be a common education at primary and secondary level; this, he believes, will play an important role in shaping an egalitarian society.

### **Louis Althusser**

Althusser explains the reproduction of the existing forces of production and the relations of production in his theory of ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). According to him, these ISAs interpellate individuals as subjects which in turn necessarily result in the reproduction of the existing relations of production. He takes the idea of a Marxian conception of state as a repressive apparatus and applies this to this theory. He makes a distinction between Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). The RSAs include the army, police, courts etc., whereas ISAs include family ISA, the educational ISA, the political ISA, the cultural ISA, etc. The RSAs belong to the public domain while the ISAs apply to the private domain. However, the distinction between public and private assumes less significance in his theory of ideology. The main difference lies in the way both of these apparatuses function. Sometimes, RSAs also carry out some of the functions of ISAs and vice-versa.

Before explaining the role of ideology in the process of interpellation of subjects, Althusser formulates a general theory of ideology by rejecting the Marxian conception of ideology. For him, ideology is not false consciousness; instead it is constitutive of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real life conditions. The notion that ideology has a material existence lies in the fact that it constitutes not only the forms of ideas, but also those of rituals and practices. Althusser accepts that specific ideologies have history, but in general, ideology has no history and is also speculative.

In order to exist in a capitalist society, it becomes necessary to reproduce both the forces of reproduction and the relations of production. The educational ISA reproduces the labour power through imparting necessary skills and techniques to young children. It also prepares them to adhere to the rules of morality and respect and other rules of the established order. It is therefore very clear that the reproduction of labour power involves both the reproduction of skills and techniques and also its submission to the rules of existing social order. The educational ISA becomes the dominant

ISA in the formation of mature capitalism by replacing the religious ISA. It also provides the necessary workforce demanded by the capitalist industries.

### **Ivan Illich**

In his book “Deschooling Society”, Illich criticizes both the functionalist and the liberal perspectives on education and suggests an alternative form of education which, he believes, will provide the basis of real liberating education. His ideas on education are rooted in his disillusionment with some aspects of educational practice and achievement. He criticizes the present institutionalized education system as limiting a person’s capacity and desire for self-learning and legitimizing the curriculum prepared by the state government. The clear-cut curriculum constitutes imposed ideas and values, which are made to be believed as the legitimate sources of knowledge. Thus, the present schooling becomes detrimental to the development of critical consciousness of the people towards society. People don’t have control over what they learn and they are made to believe that whatever they are taught by an instructor has more intrinsic value. Real learning, by contrast, is not the result of instruction, but involves the direct and free participation of people in every learning process in exactly the way that they want. It makes people submissive and passive, conforming to the dominant values and ideologies imposed by the state.

For Illich, universal education cannot be realized through the process of schooling. The institutionalized education system curtails the people’s right to learn by making it compulsory to attend school. It denounces self-perpetuating education. Due to this, many people are deprived of a basic education and those who are not able to attend are discriminated against. Education also becomes a valuable commodity. Instead, education should be made to available to all.

The market value assigned to education encourages people to attend school just for the sake of getting degrees, diplomas and certificates so that they can be able to secure jobs in the market economy. People are taught to tailor their aspirations and desires in accordance with marketable values. The institutionalized values imparted in schools are considered to be the tool for measuring personal growth. People also tend to follow the standards expected in schools. For Illich, personal growth cannot be measured in terms of schooling.

Deschooling does not mean the closing down of schools or a free education in which the curriculum was set by the students themselves; instead, it refers to transforming or recreating the ethos of schooling with the objective of making education freely available in different accessible forms. Ivan Illich proposed two main alternatives to schooling; 'skills exchange' and 'learning webs'. In skills exchange, instructors should teach the skills they use in daily life to all. In learning webs, people who have the same interests should come together to discuss specific problems. These alternatives provide the basis of creative and exploratory learning. Schools should favour the policy of attracting students rather than compelling them to become involved.

Illich's radical concept of 'Deschooling' received much criticism. Some scholars argued that the ideas of Illich pertaining to educational learning are based on institution and lack the spirit of socio-educational research. His specific proposals for reform are less satisfactory than his analysis of current educational practice. He ignores the problem of aspiration towards learning as he assumes aspirations of one sort or other for everyone. Despite these criticisms, it still remains an influencing theory in the field of the sociology of education.

## **Bourdieu's Forms of Capital**

Bourdieu tries to go beyond the economic conception of capital that represents material exchange and instead explains other forms of capital which are non-material. His main focus is on how different forms of capital are acquired and are converted into other forms. Such insights into the various forms of capital will help to understand the structure and functioning of society. He explained two non-material forms of cultural capital and social capital.

### **Cultural capital**

Bourdieu developed the concept of cultural capital to prove the fact that economic obstacles are not enough to explain disparities in the educational attainment of children from different social backgrounds. He introduces this concept of cultural capital to explore how cultural disposition and habits play a vital role in maintaining disparities in the educational achievements of children. Cultural capital is a form of non-material capital, which is different from an economic conception of capital. It could

be used as a means of generating economic success and be monopolized by individuals and groups.

Bourdieu criticizes the system of formal education for re-establishing the inequality of educational attainment. Cultural disposition and skills are necessarily important to school success. Family plays a significant role in imparting those cultural skills and competence. The elite and middle class families provide more opportunities for their children to appropriate this cultural capital, whereas the children of socially and economically disadvantaged families are deprived of these opportunities. For example, children of high class families have good communication skills in English and basic knowledge of technology. These two skills could be used by them as a resource of gaining educational success more effectively than children belonging to less advantaged families.

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital exists in three distinctive forms; 'embodied', 'objectified' and 'institutionalized'. The embodied form of cultural capital refers to the individual's competence and skills, which can be appropriated through investing more time and effort. These cannot be transmitted instantaneously. An Engineering student, for example, can gain more competence in a particular area of his interest by joining a particular course which may involve years of learning and training.

The objectified state of cultural capital refers to objects such as materials, machines, books, etc. The use of these objects requires a certain amount of embodied skill. A computer is an example of an objectified state of cultural capital. Here, the individual should have at least a little knowledge of how to operate a computer. This form of capital could be appropriated through economic capital. The institutionalized form of cultural capital provides a legally guaranteed value. Schools certify individuals' competencies and skills by issuing credentials and confer an objective value to their holder in the form of educational degree. Thus, the educational degree is an institutionalized form of cultural capital.

The school system transforms the cultural capital acquired by an individual into "scholastic" cultural capital, which is the basis of individual achievement and of economic success. Schools view this individual achievement as a matter of the individual's natural talent or effort. In this way the system of formal education legitimizes inequality in cultural capital and reproduces the existing structure of inequality.

## **Social Capital**

Social capital refers to the aggregate of actual resources that can be appropriated by a durable network of institutionalized relationship. An individual's social capital is determined by the size of his or her relationship network. This social network is maintained through continuous exchange. It has a strong influence on the levels of educational attainment over time for future goals. One can gain more educational success through maintaining the network of social relations. The educational success attained by this social capital could be converted into economic capital. All types of capital can be derived from economic capital. Bourdieu also states that cultural and social capital are fundamentally rooted in economic capital, but they cannot be completely reduced to an economic form.

## **Education and Feminism**

Weiner (1997), while interrogating the relationship between feminism and access to educational opportunities, examined the link between women's education and transformation in society in the form of a 'wave'. The first wave started in the early nineteenth century and stretched into the first two decades of the twentieth century, while the second began in the late 1960s. The first wave was associated with the rising aspirations of liberal individuals drawing specifically on ideas about natural rights, justice and democracy, for extending legal, political and employment rights of middle class women.

The second wave is associated with the women's movement, which had employed a more radical approach and had its dissident origins in Marxist scholarship. Liberal feminists demand access to education and equal opportunities for both sexes to create an environment where an individual woman's potential can be encouraged and developed. Firestone (1970) in *Dialectic Sex* defined society in terms of the sex or class system and encouraged feminist revolution. This group of feminists asserted women's freedom and demanded wider accessibility to education, employment and space in modern means of production and services.

## **Sociology of Education: Indian context**

An attempt has been made with the preceding account to review current trends in the issues and challenges faced by Dalit women in education,

particularly at the collegiate stage. The UNESCO (2003) study reported on educational status in developing countries, and revealed that 115 million children between the ages of six and eleven are out of school every year and another 150 million of those currently enrolled will drop out before completing the primary level; out of this, two thirds of these children are girls. Girls' education has been acknowledged as one of the most important developmental challenges of the world's societies.

Though there have been significant improvements in literacy rates, the number of children, especially girls, who are out of school remains high, mainly at the secondary stage. There is a clear disparity in terms of average schooling years, with trends indicating that more girls than boys fail to complete their schooling. Although the enrolment rate has increased dramatically, the phenomenon of dropout and non-attendance remains high. Less than 50 per cent of the students who join class I are able to reach class V. The dropout rate for girls is higher than that of boys and is significantly higher for rural girls, who can be viewed as the 'shutouts' of the education system. The growth of female illiterates—especially in the age group of 15-40 years—is testimony to the large-scale failure of education in independent India to enrol and retain girls in schools (Nayar 1993).

**Table No: 2.1. Dropout Rates in different Indian States**

<b>Dropout Rates at the Primary Level</b>													
<b>State</b>		<b>Official Statistics of Dropout Rates</b>						<b>From NSS 52nd Round</b>					
		<b>Rural Dropout</b>			<b>Urban Dropout Rate</b>			Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female						
1	India	25.6	26	25.8	6.6	7.3	6.9	4.4	4.4	4.2			
2	Andhra Pradesh	<b>27.4</b>	27.2	27.3	10.8	10.5	10.6	4.4	4.9	4			
3	Arunachal Pradesh	23.4	23.3	23.4	7.5	8.9	8.2	3.1	2.5	4			
4	Assam	23.6	24.7	24.1	6.2	6.6	6.4	5.5	5.6	5.3			
5	Bihar	<b>25.9</b>	26	25.9	3.8	4.1	4	4.5	4	5.1			
6	Goa	22.5	22.3	22.4	0	4.1	2.1	1.2	0	2.6			
7	Gujarat	18.8	17.2	18.1	10.5	9.9	10.2	4.9	5.1	4.5			
8	Haryana	22.1	19.1	20.7	5.4	4.1	5.8	6.2	5.8	6.5			
9	Himachal Pradesh	<b>28.1</b>	22	25.2	3.8	3.2	3.5	2.8	3.1	2.4			
10	Jammu and Kashmir	<b>27</b>	29.2	27.9	4	5.4	4.6	3.8	3.8	3.6			
11	Karnataka	20.8	21.5	21.5	7.9	8.8	8.3	3.1	3.1	3			
12	Kerala	18.5	19.7	19.1	1.3	1	1.2	1.2	1	1.3			
13	Madhya Pradesh	19.3	18.1	18.8	6.9	9.4	7.9	4	4.4	3.6			



14	Maharashtra	19.6	19.9	19.7	5.8	6.9	6.3	2.9	3.3	3.5
15	Manipur	19.6	20.2	19.9	4.6	11.2	7.7	0.5	0	1.3
16	Meghalaya	<b>30.6</b>	30.9	30.7	9.8	6.3	8.2	2.6	1.5	4
17	Mizoram	<b>25.9</b>	26.6	26.2	4.4	6.6	5.3	1.8	2.7	0.8
18	Nagaland	23.4	25.9	24.6	4.2	3.4	3.8	0.7	1.2	0
19	Orissa	22.8	25.7	24	7.8	12.7	10.1	8.2	6.5	10
20	Punjab	19.3	18.1	18.7	3.8	7.5	5.4	2.8	3.3	1.9
21	Rajasthan	<b>32.7</b>	34.8	33.5	5.2	6.9	5.9	4.7	4.8	4.5
22	Sikkim	25.1	27.5	26.3	15.2	8.6	11.8	6.3	2.7	9.5
23	Tamil Nadu	19.3	18	18.7	8.8	11.1	10	7	6.7	7.3
24	Tripura	22	22.1	22.1	9.5	13.4	11.3	2.1	1.1	3.2
25	Uttar Pradesh	<b>37.8</b>	42.9	40.4	5.1	4	4.6	4	4.1	3.9
26	West Bengal	<b>35.8</b>	41.3	38.4	11.5	11.1	11.3	2	3.4	0.5

Source: Jayachandra Usha (2007).

Although India is the one of the world's developing countries, its education situation demonstrates its backward position with regard to various educational issues. One of the major problems faced by the Indian education system is high dropout rates at the lowest level of education, primary education. The above table demonstrates the significant range of dropout levels experienced across Indian states. Almost ten states have indicated higher levels of dropout rate when compared to the national average (25.6%). Andhra Pradesh is one of the most backward states in terms of education, which is reflected in its high level of dropout rate (27.4%), which is higher than the national average.

Realising the importance of girls' education, the government initiated a number of programmes designed to encourage the educational participation of girls, and developed policies and schemes aimed at maintaining higher retention rates in schools. In the broadest sense, education is not simply an agent of socialisation and a means of acquisition of knowledge and learning skills; education is a human right.

The Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2003-04) viewed gender equality in education as essential for sustainable development. Gender equality in education would imply girls and boys being offered the same opportunities to go to school, enjoying teaching methods and curricula free of stereotype and academic orientation and counselling unaffected by gender bias. In actual practice, however, this equality is yet to be achieved; one of the best indicators of gender disparity in education is evident even at the entry level of education.

By recognising the critical role of education in shaping and directing the lives of women, the international community has made girls' education an issue of global importance. As a result of the Dakar framework of action, the Millennium Development Goals aimed to enhance the chances for female education. The outcome of these global goals was a shift in the attention of various nations towards the issue of girls' education, particularly in terms of helping girls to achieve their right to education (Obanya, 2004). Over a period of four developmental decades (1951-91), various developmental plans, policies and programmes were implemented and brought about improvement in the socio-economic status of girls, especially in the field of education where a number of steps were taken to achieve their equality in line with the national policy of education, established in 1986.

According to the Indian census of 2001, female literacy had risen to 54% in 2001 from 39% in 1991, while the enrolment rate of girls in primary and upper primary schools also improved from 35.3% in 1980-81 to 67.5% in 2000-01. State initiatives and the efforts of civil society have been instrumental in strengthening the educational system at the grassroots level. But while at the primary level, the education system has undeniably increased its outreach and coverage and enrolment rates have also increased considerably, the massive drop-out levels of enrolled girls have continued to drain a system which desperately needs closer attention (Nayar, 1993).

According to Chanana (2001), women in India do not have equal status to men. Discrimination on the basis of gender tends to support traditional social customs, attaching lower social status to women and marginalising them from diverse institutions; education is no exception to this. Due to the various forms of discrimination and exclusion, women, minorities and under-privileged groups such as Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) are lagging in education across the board. Chanana described Indian society as a compartmental society in which the position of a social group in the traditional hierarchy dictates its ability to access resources such as education and employment.

In such a social system it is highly problematic for these groups to accommodate and adjust within the educational system. Chanana (2001) observes that at independence in 1947, the political elite, social reformers and intellectuals of India saw education as a tool for social change, mobility, equality and the integration of society. A newly-independent India opened the education system to deprived groups, including women, and constitutionally acknowledged the legitimate rights of these sections of society to various levels of education.

Wankhede (1999) in his study on social mobility and SCs in India observed that SCs encounter discrimination in education and government employment, and that different forms of discrimination persist even today. In comparison to non-SCs, SCs are economically poor and socially marginalised. A survey conducted by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) also proved the underdevelopment of SCs as a group.

Dube and Mathoor (1972) in their study found that the population of the states of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Maharashtra constitutes 39 percent of the total population of India. These three states account for 60

percent of scholarships, and the remaining 61 percent of the population only 40 percent of scholarships. Dube and Mathoor observe that within this population, almost all of the Dalits are landless agricultural labourers, the majority of whom continue to lag behind the general population as a result of their poor economic status.

Thorat (2004) observes the need for education reform in order to address the needs of the people by making education a powerful instrument for socio-economic and cultural transformation. In support of this principle, education should be developed so as to increase productivity, achieve social and national integration, and accelerate the modernisation of collective social, moral and spiritual values.

Nambissan (1998) in her article titled 'Dealing with deprivation' examined the learning experience of Dalit and Adivasi children, giving a number of reasons for the lack of education of these groups. The reasons which she identified are as follows:-

1. Teacher's absenteeism and non-functioning of schools for prolonged periods.
2. Shorter school days in SC/ST school areas in comparison to those of non-SC/ST. This is regarded as being due to the fact that most of the teachers belong to the dominant caste and choose not to stay in these villages, thus reducing school contact hours.
3. Problems relating to the unquestioned authority of teachers by students (District Primary Education Project [1999]), which lead to children not asking questions, even to clarify doubts. It was observed that if classes have only one or two teachers, pupils are forced to work in silence and punishments are used to retain order.

Maintaining discipline usually dominates the classroom process. Anita (2000) called this process "domesticating orientation". It has been observed that Adivasi and Dalit children often find language and school cultures to be the main obstacles to education. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) states that there is a need to integrate the socio-cultural perspectives of the tribe to accommodate their linguistic specifications. Nambissan (2003) notes that negative attitudes of teachers towards the use of tribal languages in schools, combined with the poor performance of children resulting from their lack of interest in education, culminate in higher dropout rates.

Nambissan also observes that textbooks often portray marginalised communities in a negative light and depict them low down the social hierarchy, while Ilaiah suggests that the linguistic skills and knowledge of the lower castes are seen to have no place in the education system. Social discrimination experienced by Dalit and Adivasi children within the school system is barely recognised. Shah and Shah (1998) found that discrimination is mostly found in forms of segregation such as seating arrangements and the denial of common resources to Dalit children, such as water from same pot as other children.

Scholars including Ilaiah and Padma Velaskar have shared their personal experiences of discrimination in schools. Children from marginalised communities are observed to perform poorly in schools due to being first generation learners with heavy household responsibilities. Teachers are known to use corporal punishment in the classroom; the DPEP (1999) report itself mentioned that punishment was not uncommon when children failed to give the correct answer to a question.

The present National Curriculum Framework (NCF) fails to address the quality of education that children of marginalised groups experience. Even initiatives like “Flexi system” are cost effective for teacher schools. Education Guarantee Schemes (EGS) are observed not to concentrate on improving the quality of education in schools where the majority of children are from marginalised communities. Nambissan (1998) in her study ‘Dealing with deprivation’ came to the conclusion that schools have failed in providing sufficient academic support to Dalit and Adivasi children, and rebukes the state for failing to protect the right of every child to education without discrimination.

According to Shah (1998), caste is an inescapable aspect of Indian society, and it can be observed that it acts as a driving force for class and polity becoming the key subjects for a long-standing and burgeoning debate. Even Shah has brought in some perspectives to bear upon this issue. For some sociologists the question of status and power relations among the different groups and sub-groups of various castes has given way to go beyond these perspectives. Whatsoever may be, the caste system in India will always remain relevant in every aspect of human life, manifesting itself in both social discrimination and educational attainment. Shah came up with a detailed analysis of various factors that determined success in

education system, aptly stating that “higher education is still mainly open to the higher castes<sup>1</sup>”.

Srinivas (1987) noticed that the process of acquiring educational qualifications has come to the domain as only affluent sections of the dominant caste have been engaging in cut-throat and intense competition for greater job opportunities and enhanced educational facilities. Despite availing these opportunities they have been seeking certain elected posts for themselves at different hierarchical levels in the villages, from Panchayats to cooperatives.

The importance of higher qualifications in education which have become necessary for employment has increased in tandem with the demand for education. According to Srinivas, politicians and caste leaders are cautious about creating caste sensitivities by promising the establishment of schools and colleges to better the populous belonging to their own castes. Srinivas says that these leaders have used “caste associations and caste appeals to rally people behind them for the matter of solidarity, immense influence in education employment and other general concession<sup>2</sup>”.

Jayram (1987) reiterates that, for selected sections of urban society, education is seen as a passport to achieving a higher occupation and social status, and therefore the system of higher education is an opportunity for such people to achieve their desires. This also encourages them to clinch the fruits of education so as to secure higher job profiles and economic prosperity. Bearing this in mind, a good socio-economic background is enhanced by premier student institutes that render high or selective education, which in turn opens doors for improved occupational and income backgrounds. Caste has become a predominately significant factor in influencing admission to urban higher education; its independent significance in bestowing social status has therefore become weak.

Chitnis (1981) articulates that Brahmins, traditionally a privileged caste group through being the pioneers in responding to modern education, are still seen to be the most dominant caste in the domain of education, despite being a single majority caste group in different institutions pertaining to

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<sup>1</sup> B. V. Shah (1998), “Education of Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes in India”, Rawat Publications, Delhi

<sup>2</sup> M. N. Srinivas, (1987), “The Dominant Caste and Other Essays”, Oxford University Press, Delhi.

higher learning. According to Chitnis, a few non-Brahmin castes have made efforts in rupturing the Brahmanical monopoly in the field of education; however, it has been observed that only certain dominant groups among them could benefit from the educational expansion which might result.

Unfortunately it is noteworthy that the progress of the lower castes, particularly the scheduled castes, seems to be painfully slow. The government has taken the responsibility of ameliorating the situation among scheduled castes into its own hands, but unfortunately the response has been far from satisfactory and no respite has been given to these subjugated communities. Suma Chitin's national survey 'Scheduled caste high school and college students in 15 states of India' reveals that a huge majority of scheduled caste members come from underprivileged backgrounds and bear the brunt of poverty, thus putting them at a disadvantage in terms of attaining education. Being the first generation in a family to attend high school or college would certainly indicate a positive return from the investment in the education of these scheduled castes. It was noted that a large population of students are zealous in study until graduation but do not consider themselves as bound to their ascribed traditional occupations. This tendency to move out of caste-confined lower status occupations is observed by these students. These findings reflect a shift in the trend of their orientation towards upward social mobility.

Pandey (1988) assumes that higher education acts as a concurrent attribute towards social stratification as well as, to a certain extent, mobility. It is characterised as a means of socio-economic improvement. Studies on Scheduled Castes show that those who possess low academic qualifications recognize the importance of having higher education in order to get a qualified and remunerative job and lead a privileged life. By contrast, highly qualified academicians show an interest in removing the drawbacks of the community and rendering services to the culture. It is clearly understood that the higher the educational background a person has achieved, the more privileged they are. Income is also a variable; those who have higher income levels are more advantaged when it comes to undergoing higher education.

Sujit Kumar Choudhary (2007) argues that higher education in India is beyond the reach of SCs in rural geographical settings. It is clear that rural students are bearing the brunt of poor academic curricula, which results in unemployment. Despite this, SCs continue to survive economically as a

result of their dependence on the upper castes' need for labour. Apart from these conditions, those who enter into higher education face barriers in entering the domain of standard pedagogies. Dalit women are the biggest victims of this domain, and face severe problems in their attainment of higher education.

Khajapeer (1996) says that historically the vulnerable groups of Indian society—namely, the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and women—have suffered deprivation in all walks of life, including education. Governments in the post-independence period have made efforts to promote the educational status of these groups through several measures, but the progress made has been well below the targets envisaged. During the post-independence period, the government of India inherited the legacy of educational backwardness, in addition to many other drawbacks. The Constitution of India is a Magna Carta for the SCs, STs, OBCs and women in respect of the special provisions made for them; for example, reservations in jobs and educational institutions and the provisions against discrimination.

Article 46, a Directive Principle of the Constitution, suggests that the state shall take special care of the educational interests of the weaker sections, particularly the SCs and STs. Even Article 15 (4) in the section on Fundamental Rights states that nothing shall prevent the state from making special provisions for the socially and educationally backward classes, particularly the SCs and STs (Choudhary 1998).

Besides the constitution, there have been various educational schemes and programmes launched by the state aimed at promoting the education of SCs and STs. The general policy guideline under the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 aimed at the 'removal of disparities' and the 'equalization' of educational opportunities with regard to the SCs. The central focus of the policy document claimed to be the attempt to improve equality between the Scheduled Castes and the non-SC population, at all stages and levels of education, in all areas, and in all the four dimensions—rural male, rural female, urban male and urban female (MHRD 1986).

## Summary

The preceding literature review brings various dimensions to the approach to education. The review started with the functionalist framework of Durkheim's theory of education, which highlights issues relating to the



socialisation of individuals in society. Durkheim regarded family as the key institution, playing a pivotal role in society. He was of the opinion that education empowers children as well as adults. Furthermore, he believed that the educational process follows homogeneity and diversity, thus the functionalist analysis attaches positive values and a critical role to education in shaping the nature and direction of social organisations.

By contrast, the Marxist approach, and its own perception of education, is slightly different from that of other sociological thinkers. Marxists perceive the present education system as being part of a super-structure which reproduces existing capitalist values. They argue that education works as an instrument to bring a consciousness which is oriented towards capitalist values, not those of a socialist society.

In dealing with the question of education in India, and particularly issues of accessibility, one can see that the role of social hierarchy is instrumental in shaping the Indian education system. Other lesser issues found to be facing the Indian education system include a smaller proportion of women teachers to men and school calendars not being responsive to the local norms and practices. For Dalit girls, the combination of socio-cultural and economic factors—such as the high cost of education and their household responsibilities—remains a major barrier to their accessing education in upper primary and secondary schools.



## CHAPTER THREE

# COLLEGIATE EDUCATION AND THE SOCIO- ECONOMIC PROFILE OF DALIT WOMEN IN PALAKURTY MANDAL

This chapter aims to provide a brief overview of the selected Mandals and factors which influence the dropout rates of Dalit girls. An attempt has been made to identify the most significant factors in shaping the dropout levels of Dalit girls in collegiate education.

According to the 2001 census, the literacy rate of India is 65.38%. The male literacy rate stands at 75.96% while the female literacy rate is 54.28%. Kerala has the highest literacy rate in India (87.86%), followed by Mizoram (86.13%), Lakshadweep (81.56), Goa (75.51%) and Delhi (75%), whereas Andhra Pradesh stands in eighth place with 61.11% literacy. Although Andhra Pradesh has played an important role in promoting professional education, it has failed at improving literacy rates in rural areas. Andhra Pradesh consists of three distinct regions, namely Andhra, Telangana and Rayalaseema. The literacy rate in Telangana stands at 49%, against 55% in costal Andhra, and 51% in Rayalaseema.

**Table 3.1: District-wide Literacy Rates in Andhra Pradesh**

S.No	District :	TP	TLP	%LP	M	%LM	F	% L F
1	Mahbubnagar	3,513,934	1,317,521	37	850,414	65	467,107	35
2	Medak	2,670,097	1,171,134	44	738,208	63	432,926	37
3	Vizianagaram	2,249,254	997,482	44	605,038	61	392,444	39
4	Adilabad	2,488,003	1,112,189	45	688,072	62	424,117	38
5	Nizamabad	2,345,685	1,044,788	45	642,996	62	401,792	38
6	Kurnool	3,529,494	1,592,172	45	1,003,659	63	588,513	37
7	Karimnagar	3,491,822	1,661,089	48	1,013,328	61	647,761	39
8	Srikakulam	2,537,593	1,217,659	48	731,778	60	485,881	40
9	Nalgonda	3,247,982	1,595,643	49	981,875	62	613,768	38
10	Warangal	3,246,004	1,595,745	49	973,527	61	622,218	39
11	Khammam	2,578,927	1,267,944	49	745,679	59	522,265	41
12	Anantapur	3,640,478	1,774,088	49	1,104,042	62	670,046	38
13	Prakasam	3,059,423	1,532,126	50	938,482	61	593,644	39
14	Visakhapatnam	3,832,336	2,002,316	52	1,171,082	58	831,234	42
15	Guntur	4,465,144	2,455,965	55	1,407,402	57	1,048,563	43
16	Cuddapah	2,601,797	1,420,752	55	867,054	61	553,698	39
17	Rangareddi	3,575,064	2,034,381	57	1,192,100	59	842,281	41
18	East Godavari	4,901,420	2,807,728	57	1,504,676	54	1,303,052	46
19	Nellore	2,668,564	1,522,866	57	866,975	57	655,891	43

20	Chittoor	3,745,875	2,176,990	58	1,273,940	59	903,050	41
21	Krishna	4,187,841	2,539,974	61	1,386,261	55	1,153,713	45
22	West Godavari	3,803,517	2,458,822	65	1,308,598	53	1,150,224	47
23	Hyderabad	3,829,753	2,634,949	69	1,449,602	55	1,185,347	45

Source: Census of India, 2001

**Table: 3.2 Literacy Rates in Telangana Region**

S.No	District :	TP	TLP	%LP	M	%LM	F	% L F
1	Mahbubnagar	3,513,934	1,317,521	37	850,414	65	467,107	35
2	Medak	2,670,097	1,171,134	44	738,208	63	432,926	37
3	Adilabad	2,488,003	1,112,189	45	688,072	62	424,117	38
4	Nizamabad	2,345,685	1,044,788	45	642,996	62	401,792	38
5	Karimnagar	3,491,822	1,661,089	48	1,013,328	61	647,761	39
6	Nalgonda	3,247,982	1,595,643	49	981,875	62	613,768	38
7	Warangal	3,246,004	1,595,745	49	973,527	61	622,218	39
8	Khammam	2,578,927	1,267,944	49	745,679	59	522,265	41
9	Rangareddi	3,575,064	2,034,381	57	1,192,100	59	842,281	41
10	Hyderabad	3,829,753	2,634,949	69	1,449,602	55	1,185,347	45

TP=Total Population, TLP= Total Literacy Population LP= Literacy Population M= Male  
 %LM= Literacy Male F= Female %LF= Literacy Female

Source: Census of India, 2001

**Table 3.3: Literacy Rates in Andhra Region**

S.No	District :	TP	TLP	%LP	M	%LM	F	%LF
11	Vizianagaram	2,249,254	997,482	44	605,038	61	392,444	39
12	Srikakulam	2,537,593	1,217,659	48	731,778	60	485,881	40
13	Prakasam	3,059,423	1,532,126	50	938,482	61	593,644	39
14	Visakhapatnam	3,832,336	2,002,316	52	1,171,082	58	831,234	42
15	Guntur	4,465,144	2,455,965	55	1,407,402	57	1,048,563	43
16	East Godavari	4,901,420	2,807,728	57	1,504,676	54	1,303,052	46
17	Nellore	2,668,564	1,522,866	57	866,975	57	655,891	43
18	Krishna	4,187,841	2,539,974	61	1,386,261	55	1,153,713	45
19	West Godavari	3,803,517	2,458,822	65	1,308,598	53	1,150,224	47

Source: Census of India, 2001

**Table 3.4: Literacy Rates in Rayalaseema Region**

S.No	District :	TP	TLP	%LP	M	%LM	F	%LF
20	Kurnool	3,529,494	1,592,172	45	1,003,659	63	588,513	37
21	Anantapur	3,640,478	1,774,088	49	1,104,042	62	670,046	38
22	Cuddapah	2,601,797	1,420,752	55	867,054	61	553,698	39
23	Chittoor	3,745,875	2,176,990	58	1,273,940	59	903,050	41

Source: Census of India, 2001

In analyzing the educational disparities across the three regions, it can be observed that the Telangana region is lagging behind other regions in terms of literacy rates. Chinna Rao (2006) emphasized the role and impact of the Wood's Dispatch of 1854 in imparting education for different sections of the society, not only through English but also the vernacular languages. Schools which were novel and unique to Andhra were those which were first started in the Godavari districts of the coastal belt. Under this scheme the villagers were asked to contribute towards the education of their children. The missionary activists primarily focused on rural areas and targeted the untouchables to promote their activities.

Missionary activists established churches which were used as schools during the day and churches during the night. As a part of their humanitarian work, they added schools and colleges to their churches and worked for the betterment of oppressed sections of the population. The schools and colleges established by the missionaries in coastal Andhra at the time of independence played a crucial role in the socio-cultural transformation of the region, and were instrumental in producing a conducive atmosphere for the consolidation of this region in terms of both education and employment. As a result, the region showed great advancement in literacy rates and enrolment in schools and colleges compared to other regions of the state (Rao, 2006).

Unlike other regions, Telangana was not exposed to the project of colonial modernisation. Consequently, missionary activities such as those described in the previous paragraph did not spread across the Telangana region.

For more than four hundred years Telangana was part of Hyderabad state, an independent kingdom ruled by Qutub Shahi and the Nizam dynasties. Unlike coastal Andhra and the Rayalaseema regions of Andhra Pradesh which were part of the Madras Presidency, Telangana was not under British rule. Under Nizam rule, the people of Telangana did not receive a proper education and were deprived of the reform movements associated with modern education. While Urdu, an Indian language, was used as the language of administration and the medium for instruction in educational institutions, other languages, such as Telugu, the mother tongue of the majority of the population in this region, were not given due importance, either as a medium of education or administration.

One example of this is that Arya Samajis used the Hindi language, instead of Telugu, in their night schools. The neglect of the Telugu language had far-reaching implications for the population of this region, and indeed the region itself. It had the effect of creating a historical burden on the region of Telangana, a burden which persisted even after India's independence and the liberation of Telangana from Nizam rule in 1948. Thus the project of colonial modernisation bypassed the Telangana region in multiple areas, and education was not an exception to this process.

Warangal is one of the more developed districts of Andhra Pradesh, and this development is evident in the areas of literacy and education. This district, along with a few other districts such as Hyderabad and Ranga Reddy, has achieved a high literacy rate. By contrast, some of the other Mandals such as Nellikudur, Palakurty, Korivi, Maripeda, and Chennaraopet display much lower rates of literacy. The table below details the literacy rate of men and women according to Mandal.



**Table No 3.5: Population and Literacy Rates in Warangal District by Mandal**

S.No	Mandal	Total population	Population		Literacy rate		Total Literacy
			Male	Female	Male	Female	
1	Dornakar	54271	27350	26921	40.24	41.46	40.85
2	Chennaraopet	48216	24623	23593	54.88	31.94	43.61
3	Korivi	64169	32311	31858	55.63	32.85	44.31
4	Gudur	53689	27560	26129	56.93	31.07	44.33
5	Nellikudur	56174	28631	27543	56.72	32.18	44.7
6	Marripeda	78747	40242	38505	57.98	35.92	47.16
7	Kodakandla	49666	25042	24624	58.38	36.68	47.34
8	Nekkonda	44532	22602	21930	60.02	35.07	47.72
9	Parvathagiri	44576	22722	21854	59.19	36.23	47.9
10	Raiparthy	51502	25926	25576	60.7	35.35	48.07
<b>*11</b>	<b>Palakurty</b>	<b>54417</b>	<b>27864</b>	<b>26553</b>	<b>61.49</b>	<b>34.45</b>	<b>48.25</b>
12	Chityal	56945	28699	28246	60.48	36.65	48.64
13	Nallabelli	36698	18819	17879	62.73	35.71	49.56
14	Narsimhulapet	56384	28632	27752	61.88	37.09	49.67
15	Kesamudram	62323	31505	30818	61.8	38.21	50.15
16	Khanapur	30867	15742	15125	62.5	37.53	50.35
17	Zaffarghad	44495	22487	22008	62.91	37.76	50.38

18	Regonda	59271	30221	29050	64.2	36.19	50.45
19	Ghanpurnulugu	33093	16644	16449	63.76	37.55	50.7
20	Wardhannapet	74793	36196	38597	65.31	38.06	51.05
21	Mogullapalli	39961	20307	19564	63.17	40.29	51.89
22	Mahabubabad	99820	50889	48931	62.73	42.04	52.55
23	Ragunadhally	52646	26431	26215	65.93	39.35	52.73
24	Narmetta	42457	21479	20978	66.04	40.27	53.29
25	Atmakur	57737	29826	27911	63.96	42.33	53.51
26	Bhupalpally	57673	29162	28511	64.61	42.26	53.56
27	Venkatapur	36475	18511	17964	67.3	40.52	54.12
28	Devarupputla	40465	20662	19983	66.15	42.06	54.33
29	Duggondi	42624	21872	20752	68.01	40.53	54.59
30	Cheriyal	67260	33584	33676	68084	40.54	54.65
31	Lingalaghampur	38730	19498	19232	67.99	41.25	54.71
32	Kothaguda	36244	18213	18031	65.26	44.14	54.74
33	Parkal	79735	40258	39477	73.92	36.36	55.32
34	Ghanpur(stn)	85976	43410	42566	67.27	43.31	55.39
35	Bachannapet	43608	21640	21968	69.58	41.55	55.53
36	Thorrur	68336	34552	33784	67.73	43.23	55.61
37	Sangem	52459	26700	25759	69.83	43.04	56.69
38	Dharmasagar	69369	35827	33542	66.55	46.24	56.76

39	Maddur	38614	19351	19263	70.42	43.08	56.81
40	Govindaraopet	29170	14707	14463	68.91	47.12	58.08
41	Eturinagaram	37024	19119	17905	71.85	44.13	58.53
42	Shyampet	40750	20610	20140	73.86	43.13	58.66
43	Mulug	58688	30202	28486	72.41	44.51	58.87
44	Hasanaparthi	74536	37887	36649	71.24	47.38	59.5
45	Mangapet	47106	23788	23318	70.2	49.09	59.74
46	Tadavai	19709	9901	9808	73.05	46.59	59.89
47	Narasampet	62125	31695	30430	72.99	47.51	60.48
48	Geesugonda	63305	31932	31373	74.86	51.83	63.47
49	Janagon	83083	41735	41348	80.37	55.37	67.89
50	Hanamakonda	81911	42296	39615	83.73	60.95	72.71
51	Warangal	528570	267820	260750	90.68	72.35	81.63

Source: Census of India, 2001

\* The Mandal which has been selected to conduct the field work.

**Table No 3.6: Literacy Rates of Palakurty Mandal**

S.No	Village Name	Total Population	No of Literates	% T L	Male	% M L	Female	% F L
1	Kothalabad	936	373	40	245	66	128	34
2	Iravennu	2,363	989	42	630	64	359	36
3	Thirmalagiri	829	326	39	211	65	115	35
4	Gudur	6,105	2,478	41	1,610	65	868	35
5	Bommera	4,103	1,308	32	889	68	419	32
6	Ayyangaripalle	610	200	33	138	69	62	31
7	Thorrur	1,886	780	41	500	64	280	36
8	Shatapuram	1,379	373	27	242	65	131	35
9	Visnoor	2,659	1,063	40	673	63	390	37
10	Lakshminarayana Puram	1,367	527	39	354	67	173	33
11	Palakurthi	6,016	3,283	55	2,094	64	1,189	36
12	Kondapuram	2,336	566	24	407	72	159	28
13	Dardepalle	4,825	1,961	41	1,262	64	699	36
14	Theegaram	949	474	50	304	64	170	36
15	Mailaram	536	143	27	95	66	48	34
16	Chennur	3,153	1,210	38	795	66	415	34
17	Manchuppula	1,817	591	33	388	66	203	34
18	Valmidi	2,929	1,257	43	790	63	467	37

19	Mutharam	2,556	1,113	44	692	62	421	38
20	Mallampalle	3,144	1,107	35	726	66	381	34
21	Vavilala	3,745	1,407	38	899	64	508	36

Source: Census of India, 2001

The rationale behind the selection of Palakurty Mandal is due to the observation that a high proportion of Dalit girls drop out of college in the middle of their studies. While the literacy rate of the Mandal is 47.97% overall, that of the Dalit community is just 10.2%. This Mandal accounts for some of the lowest levels of female literacy and is considered one of the most backward Mandals in this district. The low literacy rates are complemented by high dropout rates in collegiate education.

**Table 3.7: Mandals with Low Female Literacy Rates in Warangal District**

S.No	Mandal Name	Literacy Percentage			
		Male	Female	Total	Dropouts at Intermediate and Degree level
1	Chennaraopet	54.61	31.94	43.41%	35
2	Gudur	56.93	31.07	44.00%	21
3	Koravi	55.63	32.85	44.24%	29
4	Nellikudur	56.72	32.18	44.45%	18
5	Palakurty	61.49	34.45	47.97%	76

Source: Census of India, 2001 and Field Study

The above table indicates the female literacy levels of some of the Mandals which account for the overall poor performance of the Mandal. Gudur Mandal records the lowest female literacy rate in the district with 31.07%, followed by Chennaraopet (31.94%), Nellikudur (32.18%), and Koravi (32.85%). Palakurty stands at fifth lowest with 34.45%. When we see the dropouts in the Mandal at inter and degree level it is found that the Palakurty Mandal has the highest dropout figures, recording 76 dropouts during the period 2001–2006.

### Mandal Profile

The Mandal chosen for this study consists of 21 villages, including some Thandas (hamlets). According to the 2001 census, the population of the Mandal is 54,243, consisting of 11,963 households, of which the average

household size is 4. Every village has a primary school and the major villages have secondary high schools.

Table 3.8 shows the population distribution by gender. Female population comprises 49% of the total population. The SC population in the Mandal is 9,286 (17.11%), of which the male population is 4,794 (51.62%) and the female population is 4,492 (48.38%). The ST population in the Mandal is 9,264 (17.07%), of which the male population is 4,818 (52.33%) and the female population is 4,446 (47.67%).

From the Table 3.8 we can understand that 34% of the people in this sample set belong to the Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes, while the other 66% of people belong to the Backward Castes and Other Castes.

Table 3.9 shows that the number of literates in the Mandal is 21,529 (39.68%), of which the male literacy rate is 13,944 (64.77%) and the female literacy rate is 7,585 (35.23%). The number of illiterates in the Mandal is 32,714 (60.32%) out of which the male illiterates number 13,725 (41.95%) and the female illiterates 18,989 (58.05%).

From this data we can recognize the degree of illiteracy and the fact that this is higher in the case of females. Some years previously, the government had taken the responsibility of improving the literacy of people in rural areas by providing Akshara Deepika programmes in the evenings with the assistance of Vidhya volunteers. However, these programmes have not continued, thus negatively impacting literacy rates in rural areas.

**Table 3.8: Population of Palakurty Mandal**

Type	Total Population	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
Total Population	54,243	27,669	51%	26,574	49%
Rural Population	54,243	27,669	51%	26,574	49%
Population (0-6)	8,179	4,206	51.40%	3,973	48.60%
SC Population	9,286	4,794	51.62%	4,492	48.38%
ST Population	9,264	4,818	52.33%	4,446	47.67%

Source: Census of India, 2001

**Table 3.9: Percentage of literacy and illiteracy in the Mandal**

	Total Population		Percentage	Total Population		Percentage
	Male	Female		Male	Female	
Number of Literates	13,944	7,585	64.77%	13,944	7,585	35.23%
Number of Illiterates	13,725	18,989	41.95%	13,725	18,989	58.05%

Source: Census of India, 2001



**Table 3.10: Occupation of Mandal inhabitants**

	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>%</b>
Cultivators	10,947	7,416	68.00%	3,531	32.00%
Agricultural Labourers	12,828	4,272	33.00%	8,556	67.00%
Workers in household industries	1,132	707	62.00%	425	38.00%
Other workers	4,399	3,549	80.67%	850	19.33%

Source: Census of India, 2001

Due to the lack of industry in the area, most of the people in the Mandal are engaged in agricultural labour for which they receive wages on a day-to-day basis. This type of work is often unreliable and irregular. Heavy concentration of labour in the agricultural sector has also led to migration to the nearby towns and cities, which has directly affected the educational attainment of the Dalit students.

**Table 3.11: Percentage of SC and ST population in the Mandal**

	<b>Total percentage</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Proportion of SC population	17.1	17.3	16.9
Proportion of ST population	17.1	17.4	16.7
Literacy rate %	46.7	59.4	33.6
Illiteracy rate %	71	58.5	84

Source: Census of India, 2001

The literacy rate of the Mandal is 46.7%, comprising a male literacy rate of 59.1% and a female literacy rate of 33.6%, while the illiteracy rate in the Mandal is 71.0%, comprising a male illiteracy rate of 58.5% and a female illiteracy rate of 84.0%. The proportion of SC population is 17.1% in which the male percentage is 17.3 and female percentage is 16.9. The proportion of ST population is 17.1% in which the males consist of 17.4% and females around 16.7%. The above table implies that 34% of the people belong to the SC/ST category, but they lag behind in comparison to other sections of the society.

The Mandal consists of different castes, of which the Reddys and Velamas are the dominant groups. Most of the Dalits are agricultural and farm labourers. Although every village has a primary school and some villages have secondary high schools, there are no government colleges either at the intermediate level or the undergraduate level in this Mandal.

There are two private colleges in this Mandal; Pothana Junior college and Sri Vivekananda Junior college. However, these colleges run their classes in temporarily built rooms.

**Table 3.13: Student and staff figures in the selected colleges**

Name of college				
Pothana Junior College		Sri Vivekananda Junior College		Total
No of Total Students	351	No of Total Students	322	673
No of Male Students	270	No of Male Students	252	522
No of Female Students	81	No of Female Students	70	151
No of SC girls	15	No of SC girls	11	26
No of SC boys	42	No of SC boys	33	75
No of Staff (total)	13	No of Staff	10	23
No of Female staff	0	No of Female staff	0	0

Source: Field Study

The above table brings the complete picture of the two colleges chosen for the study, demonstrating not only student and staff figures on the basis of gender, but also the number of SC students by gender. In Pothana Junior College there are 351 students, of whom 270 (76.92%) are male students and 81 (23.08%) are female students. There is a dramatic difference in the number of female students to male students, with more than three times as many male students as female students. From the total population of the school, the number of Schedule Caste (SC) male students is 42 (11.96%), while the number of Schedule Caste female students is 15 (4.27%). There are 13 total staff at the college, all of whom are male.

In Sri Vivekananda Junior College, the total student population is 322, of whom 252 (78.26%) are male students and 70 (21.74%) are female students. From the total population of the school, the number of SC boys is 33 (10.25%), while the number of SC girls is 10 (3.42%). There are 10 total staff at the college, all of whom are male. If the populations of both colleges are put together, there are 673 students, of which 522 (77.56%) are male and 151 (22.44%) female.

It has been discovered that the highest drop-out rates in the Mandal occur at the high school stage. It was observed that the pass out rate in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) was much lower. Students who pass the SSC gain admission to colleges such as those examined above. The

total number of Scheduled Caste students in both of the colleges comes to 101 (15% of the total student population), of which 75 (74.25%) are male and 26 (25.75%) are female. The total number of staff in both colleges comes to 23, of which all are male.

**Table 3.14: Number of students in different courses in the colleges**

<b>Distribution of Students by Caste and Group</b>									
<b>Pothana Junior College</b>					<b>Sri Vivekananda Junior College</b>				
	MPC	BPC	CEC	HEC	MPC	BPC	CEC	HEC	Total
OC	39	45	20	12	32	38	17	11	214
OBC	48	35	31	20	39	34	38	29	274
SC	13	20	14	11	10	14	11	8	101
ST	8	12	15	9	4	9	11	16	84
Total	108	112	80	52	85	95	77	64	673

Source: Field Study

MPC – Maths, Physics, Chemistry

BiPC – Botany, Zoology, Physics, Chemistry

CEC – Civics, Economics, Commerce

HEC – History, Economics, Civics

Examining this data, we discover that if both of the colleges are viewed together, the largest caste group is OBC with a total number of 274 students, comprising 40.71% of the total student population. Following this is the OB caste with a total number of 214 students, comprising 31.79% of the total student population. The Scheduled Caste students rank third with a total of 101 students, comprising 15% of the total student population. The smallest group is that of the Scheduled Tribes, who make up 84 students, comprising 12.5% of the total student population.

A positive relationship between course selection and students' social background is observable in this data. For example, 72% of the OB (upper caste) students opt for science groups, whereas 57% of the OBC, 56% of the SC and 39% of the ST students opt for the science groups. When the researcher asked the girls what their principle reason was for selecting the science groups, they replied that, since they belong to the upper caste, they feel proud to select the science courses. Although the combined population of students from the BC, SC and ST backgrounds accounts for 68% (459 out of 673) of the total student population, on average 55% of the students

have chosen courses which appear to be highly expensive and prestigious in comparison to the arts and commerce streams.

When we compare social backgrounds with respect to student selection of liberal arts courses, it is found that only 28% of students from upper castes opt for these courses, in comparison to 45% of SC students and 60% of ST students. When the researcher asked the upper caste students who chose the liberal arts courses, they replied that it was those who were more economically backward than the students who opted for the science courses, or those who were just interested in studying arts courses. The researcher also found that even students from the Dalit community gave more priority to the science courses. When the researcher asked the Dalit students why they gave more priority to the science courses, some of them said that if they do the BPC course they can more easily join nursing and teacher training courses. Some of the students who are studying in liberal arts courses told the researcher that they chose to do so because they were not interested in science courses.

It is observed that most of the students give first priority to the BPC course in comparison to the other courses offered. The rationale behind the selection of the BPC course could be attributed to a number of factors, including the encouragement of senior students or teachers to do so, or the individual student's own wish to become a doctor. Thus students tend to give priority to science courses which include biology as an option. It was also found that students receive a lot of support and encouragement from parents if they chose to study market-driven courses.

From the previous account we can understand that colleges are largely made up of students from backward communities or the Upper Castes; students from SC and ST backgrounds comprise only a small number. Most students are forced to study in this type of college due to a lack of corporate or government-run colleges. Parents from affluent backgrounds prefer to send their children to the corporate colleges located in nearby towns and cities. These findings correlate with the number of earlier studies which show the positive correlation between the social position of students and their course selection.

Looking at the enrolment of Dalit girls at an intermediate level, it is clear that they number much fewer than Dalit boys. Year-wise enrolment figures show that the number does not exceed 40. This means that the percentage of girls completing 10<sup>th</sup> standard is much less when compared

to other caste people. To take one example, in one school visited by the researcher –Zilla Parishad High School (ZPHS) in Eravanne Village– only 6 Dalit girls completed their SSC in the 5 year period between 2002 and 2007, thus illustrating the chronically poor enrolment and pass-out rates of Dalit girls in rural areas.

**Table 3.15: Dropout Rates of Dalit girls by year**

<b>Dropout Rate of Dalit girls by year</b>			
Year	Enrolment	Dropouts	Percentage
2001-02	14	8	57.14%
2002-03	25	12	48.00%
2003-04	19	11	57.89%
2004-05	22	13	59.00%
2005-06	34	16	47.00%
Total	114	60	52.63%

Source: Field Study

The above table shows that in the year 2001-02, 14 Dalit girls enrolled, but 8 (57.14%) dropped out. In the year 2002-03 the number of Dalit girls who enrolled increased to 25, while the number who dropped out came down to 12 (48%). In the year 2003-04 the number enrolled was 19, while the dropout number was 11 (57.89%), whereas in the year 2004-05 the enrolment number was 22 and the dropout number was 13 (59%).

Finally, in the year 2005-06 the enrolment number was higher in comparison to the previous years and the dropout rate was slightly lower than that of the year 2002-03, and the lowest of the five year period. Taken as a whole, the overall enrolment of Dalit girls in Pothana Junior College and Sri Vivekananda Junior College over the five year period between 2001 and 2006 is 114 and the dropout rate is 52.63%.

The dropout rates of the students are increasing year by year; on average, between 10 and 20 Dalit girls drop out per Mandal, per year. If this data is extrapolated for the whole district, it would come to nearly 500 students. This number is considerable and is essentially the equivalent of the population of one college dropping out every year.

### Student profiles

From the Mandal chosen for this study, the researcher found 60 Dalit girls who, due to various socio-cultural and academic factors associated with their studies, dropped out in the middle of their education. The table below demonstrates drop-out rates of this group by age.

**Table 3.16: Age category of students**

Age		
Category	Frequency	Percent
16-20	50	83.3%
21-24	10	16.7%
Total	60	100%

Source: Field Study

The above table shows that at the time that they dropped out of collegiate education, 50 of these 60 students belonged to the 16-20 age group, and 10 belonged to the 21-24 age group. From this we can observe that students are more likely to drop out of education between the ages of 16 and 20, a move which thus prevents them from continuing their education and pursuing studies at a higher level.

The following tables provide a range of analytical observations regarding the high dropout rate of Dalit girls from collegiate education, the academic bridge between the school and higher education.

**Table 3.17: Marital status of Dalit girls by age**

Marital status			
Age	Married	Unmarried	Total
16-20	13 (59.9%)	37 (97.36%)	50 (83.33%)
21-24	9 (40.1%)	1 (2.64%)	10 (16.67%)
Total	22 (100%)	38 (100%)	60 (100%)

Source: Field Study

The above table shows that 13 (59.9%) of the 50 students in the sample set got married between the ages of 16 and 20, while the remaining 37 (97.36%) students belonging to this age group remained unmarried. The total number of students in this age group who dropped out is 50 (83.33%). The number of students who got married between the ages of 21 and 24 is 9 (40.1%); only 1 student (2.64%) in this age group is unmarried. The total number of students in this age group who dropped out is just 10 (16.67%).

In total, across the two age groups, 22 students got married while 38 remained unmarried. The data demonstrates the prevalence of early-age marriage, with more students getting married between the ages of 16 and 20 than between the ages of 21 and 24. Another student said that she did not know about society when she got married. With respect to level of education, the point of marriage varies; one student told the researcher that she had been married when she was in 7<sup>th</sup> standard; other students were married whilst studying for their 10<sup>th</sup> standard or their intermediate, while the rest got married when whilst pursuing degree education. This demonstrates that despite their early marriages, students still complete the minimum level of education.

Field research was used to discover the reasons behind early marriage for different sections of society. Some respondents explained that families prefer their female children to marry at a very young age; testimonies of respondents who were married in the seventh or eighth standard validate this.

Some respondents testified that early-age marriages are common in rural areas, and that it is not a problem primarily relating to a lack of education; even those who are educated support this kind of marriage. Some respondents explained that though they were not interested in an early-age marriage, their family members and elders insisted that they accept the marriage proposal. One respondent told the researcher that some socially-committed villagers took the initiative to stop child marriages, but were met with strong resistance and in some cases even received beatings from other villagers for their stance. One respondent from Mahila Samakya recalled trying to explain to parents the problems associated with early-age marriage, an attempt which fell on deaf ears. A different approach taken by some village residents has been to target the youth instead, motivating them to convince their parents to stop child marriages.



Some of the village presidents explained the work they had carried out to discourage child marriages, including conducting awareness programmes delivered by officials and NGO organisations. Unfortunately, such programmes have brought about little change. If questioned, parents insist that they do not demand any financial assistance for their child's marriage, and as a result it ought to remain purely a family affair.

It was also found that child marriages are more prevalent among the Dalits and Tribal communities, largely due to a lack of education and awareness of the problems relating to early marriages. Some of the parents of the respondents complained about the discouraging atmosphere in the villages towards education, coupled with the harmful effect of television. Parents worry about bringing their children up in this environment and see marrying them off as early as possible as a way of shielding them from perceived dangers.

### **Education Profile of Students**

Examining the educational profile of the students selected, we find that 55 (91.66%) of the 60 students have completed their primary and secondary education in rural areas as day-scholars, while the remaining 5 (8.34%) have studied in the social welfare residential institutions from 6<sup>th</sup> standard to intermediate. The medium of instruction for the 60 (100%) students in primary, secondary and intermediate levels is Telugu, their mother tongue. None of the students have been educated in private schools or convent schools with English as the medium of instruction.

The parents of the Dalit students demonstrated a lack of consciousness about the importance of education, a factor which was compounded by their not being able to afford convent school education, unlike parents belonging to the upper and middle classes. According to Karuna Chanana (2001), the hierarchy of educational establishments is as follows; the first category are convent schools, the second category are private institutions in rural, sub-urban and urban areas, and the third category are government schools.

The cost of maintenance of these schools is entirely met by the government and consequently the tuition fees are comparatively low. However, various facilities are either poor or missing entirely, and there is little emphasis on the provision for comprehensive education. The classes are generally overcrowded and the teacher-student ratio is very low.

**Table 3.18: Group obtained at intermediate level**

<b>Group obtained at intermediate level</b>				
<b>Division secured in SSC</b>	<b>MPC</b>	<b>BPC</b>	<b>CEC</b>	<b>Total</b>
First	10 (20%)	29(56.77%)	12(23.23%) )	51 (85%)
Second	1(11.11%)	6 (66.67%)	2 (22.22%)	9 (15%)
Total	11(18.33%) )	35 (58.34%)	14(23.33%) )	60 (100%)

SSC – Secondary School Certificate

Source: Field Study

The table shows that 51 (85%) of the 60 students selected secured first division with distinction in SSC; only 9 (15%) students secured second division in this exam. It means that most of the Dalit girls performed well in the SSC standard, and few of them showed poor performance in their studies at high school level. It is thought that if the students receive a good standard of education at the high school standard, they are less likely to drop out. Since education is conducted in the mother tongue, Telugu, beginning to learn languages such as Hindi and English in the 6<sup>th</sup> standard can be very difficult for students.

Out of 51 students who secured first division, 10 (20%) students took MPC as their group in intermediate, 29 (56.87%) took BPC and the remaining 12 (23.23%) students took CEC. Out of the nine students who passed in the second division, 6 (66.67%) took BPC, 2 (22.22%) took CEC and only 1 (11.11%) took MPC. Looking at subject selection across the two groups of first and second division in SSC, 35 (58.33%) students took BPC as their group in intermediate, while 14 (23.33%) took CEC, and 11 (18.34%) took MPC.

Most of the students did not show interest in the CEC and MPC streams. Instead, most of the Dalit girls are shown to have preferred to study BPC, in order to get into the nursing profession. It is also important to note that most of the female students who choose the MPC course do so due to the materialist emphasis shaped by the market forces which work on the basis of education as future investment, not as an investment of knowledge.

It is found that out of the 60 students analysed, only 8 (13.33%) passed in intermediate education, whereas the 5 (8.33%) students who passed in first division studied in the social welfare residential college and the 3 (5%) who passed in second division enrolled in the government junior college. After completion of their intermediate, only these 8 (13.33%) students joined for undergraduate education, of which 5 (8.33%) students belong to the Science faculty and 3 (5%) students have opted for the Arts faculty.

**Table: 3.19: Course opted for at degree level**

<b>Courses Opted for at Degree Level</b>		
<b>Course</b>	<b>Total Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
B.SC	5	62.5%
B.Com	1	12.5%
B.A	2	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100%</b>

B.SC – Bachelor of Science  
 B.Com – Bachelor of Commerce  
 B.A – Bachelor of Arts  
 Source: Field Study

The above table demonstrates the courses opted for at degree level by the 8 students who managed to pass the intermediate level and join degree courses. These 8 students are the only members of the original group of 60 dropouts who reached graduation level. Of these 8, 5 (62.5%) students took a B.Sc course; 1 (12.5%) took a B.Com course; and the remaining 2 (25%) took a B.A course. These findings demonstrate the multitude of factors relating to policy and social levels which determine the success of intermediate education.

**Table 3.20: Details of dropout students at various levels**

<b>Dropout of student at various levels</b>				
	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
	52	0	52	86%
	0	8	8	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Study

The above table shows that of the 60 students examined, 52 (86%) dropped out during the intermediate level of their education and 8 (14%) dropped out during their undergraduate education. Most of the students who dropped out during the intermediate level of their education did so due to their failure to complete their intermediate first year courses. There are several explanations behind the decisions of these students to drop out of education. Some students maintained that they stopped attending college because they were not interested in their studies. Another reason is the impact of the media; television and cinema are seen to distract students away from their studies.

Financial constraints can cause some students to drop out; it was found that due to non-payment of college fees, the management did not allow students to continue their studies and they thus stopped going to college. Some of the respondents explained that various health problems which occurred at the time of examinations prevented them from attending the exams, thus forcing them to drop out of college. Taken overall, problems such as those suggested above meant that 52 (86%) students have dropped out in intermediate education due to several problems such as failure at intermediate level, lack of interest, health problems, etc. 8 (14%) students who joined undergraduate education were not able to complete their degree education and discontinued midway.

Other explanations for dropping out emerged anecdotally in conversations between the researcher and the students in this study. For example, one respondent said that she was forced to drop out at undergraduate level due to being 'visually challenged' and living too great a distance from college. One of the respondents' fathers told the researcher that he had not allowed his daughter to continue her college education due to a lack of security. Some respondents claimed that family problems were the reason behind them not being able to continue their education.

### **Family Assets / Economic Sources**

**Table 3.21. Details of land assets**

<b>Frequency</b>		<b>Percentage</b>
Landowners	13	21. 7%
Landless	47	78. 3%
Total	60	100%

Source: Field Study

The above table details the land assets (or lack thereof) belonging to the families of the 60 students selected for this study. The majority of respondents belong to families who do not own land; only 13 (21.7%) belong to families who do own land. Members of the former group largely come from poor families which fall below the poverty line (BPL). Lacking any type of family assets, they are forced to depend upon a daily wage. In terms of housing, the majority of respondents does not have proper houses and instead live in small huts. Some respondents reside in houses constructed under government housing schemes for Dalits.

**Table 3.22. Family income of parents**

Income	Frequency	Percent
0–10000	47	78.3%
11000–20000	13	21.7%
Total	60	100%

Source: Field Study

Turning our attention now to family income, it can be seen that the families of 47 (78.3%) respondents have an annual income of below Rs 10,000 per annum. The families of the remaining 13 (21.7%) respondents have an annual income between Rs 11,000–20,000 per annum. While the families whose annual income is between Rs 10,000 and 20,000 are in a position to afford their children's education, those parents whose annual income falls below Rs 10,000 are unable to. Of the sample set, no single family has an income of more than Rs 20,000.

Examining the parental occupation of the respondents, it is observed that around 49 (81.66%) family members are engaged in agricultural work, while the remaining 11 (18.34%) family members are engaged as daily labourers. Those families who possess land assets engage in their own agricultural work and do not depend on any other work, while those who do not possess any type of land engage in agricultural work and subsist on a daily wage. In this sample set, none of the family members of the respondents are employed either in private or government sector companies and organisations.

**Table 3.23. Educational profile of parents**

<b>Education Qualification of the Parents</b>			
	Father	Mother	Qualification
Literates	13 (21.66%)	5 (8.33%)	1–5 class
Illiterates	47 (78.34%)	55 (91.64%)	-
Total	60 (100%)	60 (100%)	-

Source: Field Study

When looking at the educational profile of the parents, it was found that 13 (21.66%) of the 60 respondents' fathers were literate and held an educational qualification below 5<sup>th</sup> standard, while the remaining 47 (78.34%) were illiterate. Just 5 of the respondents' mothers held an educational qualification below 5<sup>th</sup> standard; 55 (91.64%) were illiterate. From the above table we can see that the majority of the family members of the 60 students chosen for this study are illiterate. It can be deduced that, due to a lack of education, they are not aware of the importance of education, and as a result do not encourage their children to study.

### **Academic conditions in the selected colleges**

In terms of the teacher-student relationship in the colleges selected for this study, 34 (56.66%) respondents said that they had a friendly relationship with their teachers, compared to 26 (43.37%) who said that they did not. This appears to be largely due to the lack of female teachers. Some respondents mentioned feeling uneasy at having to address certain questions to male teachers. One respondent told the researcher that they considered the appointment of female teachers crucial to enhancing academic and social relations between female students and faculty members. When the researcher asked the college management about the recruitment of female teachers, they were told that female teachers are unwilling to teach at the college since the Mandal it is in is so far from the nearest city.

The management explained that they were not in the position to be able to recruit experienced staff to teach in the colleges. The reason behind this is unclear; however, it means that the college is staffed with inexperienced teachers, many of whom only stay at the college for a year before moving on. This lack of continuity has a marked impact on the student's education. When the researcher asked about the college's academic programmes, 50

(83.33%) of the respondents said that no variety of assignment or unit test is conducted during the course of the college year; instead, once a year pre-final exams are carried out in order to familiarize students with the question pattern of the annual exams.

One of the respondents told the researcher that the college staff do not appear to take the education of their students seriously, or worry about the level of comprehension their students achieve in the subjects they teach them. Another respondent mentioned issues relating to the use of languages in the school, explaining that as a result of this, students from rural backgrounds are unable to communicate with the faculty. It was found that the faculty discourages students from sharing their experiences and expressing their doubts, and perhaps even more worryingly, due to a lack of knowledge, teachers are seen to discourage students from asking questions. According to Anita (2000), teachers and college heads have a tendency to relate the poor academic performance of Dalit children to their social background.

### **Difficulties within subjects**

It was observed that all of the students who dropped out faced problems with their specified subjects. A large proportion of the respondents told the researcher that despite having completed their primary and secondary education in government schools, they still did not have comprehensive knowledge of core subjects such as English, Maths and Physical Sciences. Some of the respondents said that they failed these subjects in the intermediate first year due to a lack of knowledge and comprehension, and discontinued their studies as a result.

Some of the respondents told the researcher that their schoolteachers had failed to teach English and Maths effectively, and they had lost interest in these subjects as a result. Anita (2000) notes in her study that students from schools located in villages with a concentrated Dalit/Adivasi population were found to perform poorly in Maths, English and science in comparison to the other caste students.

### **Tuition**

Despite many of the respondents displaying weaknesses in their respective subjects, the college management failed to take effective action –such as identifying those students who were performing poorly and conducting

special classes for them— to improve the situation. Unfortunately there is a lack of specialist coaching centres in the Mandal for students who require additional help in specific subjects. Some of the respondents said that they were lacking tuition in subjects including Maths, Physics, Chemistry and English, and it would be advantageous if there were tuition centres located near to their college premises.

### **College facilities**

According to Satya Sundaram (1969), certain educational institutions are under-staffed and ill-equipped. There appears to be a worrying trend in the contemporary education system of increasing student numbers at colleges, irrespective of college size and facilities. Neither of the two colleges selected for this study were found to have adequate facilities for their students.

### **Libraries**

Libraries are an essential feature of educational institutions and are crucial in both the acquisition and enhancement of knowledge. A little over half of the respondents (31 of the 60—51.66%) said that their college contained only a small library which lacked reference books, while the remaining respondents said that they did not have any type of library facility in their college. Some of the respondents said that as a result, they were forced to use their own money to buy the books they needed.

### **Lab Facilities**

Lab facilities are very important for the development of students' practical knowledge. When students were asked about the presence of lab facilities in their college, 36 (60%) respondents said that they had small lab facilities, lacking in the raw materials and instruments essential for conducting experiments. The remaining 24 (40%) respondents said that their college had no lab facilities at all. The respondents explained that for a week prior to their final exams, students were allowed to train at another college which had a lab. This arrangement was far from ideal though; some respondents claimed that this depth of experience was insufficient and they failed their practical exams as a result. From the foregoing analysis it is easy to conclude that the state indiscriminately allows private players to open colleges, having far-reaching consequences in maintaining



quality education. The situation is worse in most state-run intermediate and degree colleges.

### **Toilets**

When asked about toilet facilities in the colleges, some of the respondents told the researcher that they had proper toilet facilities, whereas others said that they did not. For female students, this is plainly divisive. Jayalaxmhi Indiresan (1993) in her study found that most colleges do not have proper toilet facilities and as a result, female students stay away from college on ‘certain days of the month.’

### **Summary**

This chapter has touched upon various academic and gender relations issues relating to the socio-economic background of the Mandal. This chapter began with an examination of literacy in the Palakurty Mandal of the Warangal district, Andhra Pradesh. The motivation behind this choice of Mandal was its poor literacy performance. Having selected this group, the dropout rates of female students were examined, and it was found that these were much higher than those of male students.

The number of dropouts is gradually increasing year on year. Overall, the study identified a number of factors which are seen to influence –both negatively and positively– the academic success of respondents and the likelihood of their dropping out. It is difficult to ascribe any one of these as the single determining factor behind academic success or failure; suffice to say, however, that in combination, these factors have a considerable impact. The final summary will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.



## CHAPTER FOUR

# DALIT WOMEN IN COLLEGIATE EDUCATION: FORMS OF EXCLUSION AND PATTERNS OF DISCRIMINATION

This chapter will analyse the forms of discrimination associated with girls' education, within both the domestic and public sphere. An attempt has been made to assess the awareness levels of parents on issues including education, social stigma attached to the education of Dalit girls, the choice of educational selection and chances of educational attainment.

### **Forms of discrimination**

Discrimination is a form of social construction which attaches different forms of stigma aimed at controlling the socio-cultural, political, economic, educational and ideological movements of the "other". As institutionalised forms of discrimination legitimated by the religious ideology, caste and gender have a larger bearing on the shaping of educational goals of different social groups, particularly Dalits.

### **Practice of social distance**

Caste discrimination has existed in Indian society since time immemorial. When the researcher asked respondents about caste discrimination, 32 (53.34%) respondents said that they had witnessed discrimination on the basis of caste in their village. One respondent said that the practice of social distance persists between the upper and lower caste groups, and is prevalent in the villages chosen for this study. Restrictions on commensality (sharing food) mean that lower caste people are not allowed to enter the houses of upper castes. In the studied Mandal, residential segregation between upper and lower castes is seen to exist.

The majority of the respondents chosen for this study are from the lower castes. Caste polarity has major implications for these students; since it effectively limits their peer group and friendship affiliations; their ability to benefit from knowledge sharing during their college careers –particularly at exam times– is also restricted. 28 of the 60 respondents said that they had experienced slight caste discrimination in the Mandal. For this group, maintaining affiliations with upper caste friends and sharing knowledge during exam periods are not straightforward.

### **Major Problems Identified by the Dropout Students: Socio-economic factors**

Amongst the sample group, female Dalit collegiate dropouts, it was found that a large number suffer from economic difficulties. It was observed that the socio-economic conditions of the respondents were worse than those of students from other castes. The majority of respondents came from families of landless agricultural labourers who engage in agricultural work. As such, their economic status has meant that they were unable to pay college fees or purchase the books needed to pursue their studies, and ultimately were forced to curtail their studies.

It was found that those respondents studying in the private colleges are charged a variety of fees, including the college fee, developmental fees as well as special fees charged by the college management. To meet these financial demands, the girls in this study are engaged as daily wage labourers during their holidays and contribute to the economic viability of their families. In order to maintain the livelihood of their families, Dalit girls join their family members in undertaking agricultural labour. Although the children receive free education, parents have to incur some debts in order to send them to college.

Such financial problems have a considerable impact on the academic progress of these girls, meaning that they are unable to concentrate on their studies while at college and are not interested in turning up to college regularly. Some of the respondents said that with the help of daily wages they earned through agricultural work, they were able to afford books and transport to college.

Some of the respondents are physically handicapped and as a result are unable to undertake agricultural work in order to contribute to their family income; instead, they have to depend on the income brought in by their

family members. One respondent told the researcher that in her family, her father; her brother and herself all suffer from physical handicaps and as a result are wholly dependent on the mother as a source of income. B. V. Shah (1998) in his study found that economic factors are instrumental in shaping attitudes towards education; poor financial situations can be seen to discourage children from pursuing collegiate education.

### **Gender discrimination within the family**

Gender discrimination is a pan-Indian phenomenon which exists across all sections of society, including the Dalit community. In the Mandal selected for this study, it was found that amongst Dalit families, the education of girls is seen as of secondary importance to that of boys.

The division of labour within a family is more often than not weighted unfairly towards girls. Girls are forced to engage in agricultural work and are expected to share household chores, and this has a significant impact on their access to education. Unlike girls, boys within Dalit families do not have the same responsibilities towards household work and are encouraged to attend both private and government-run schools and colleges.

One of the respondents told the researcher that if a girl asks her parents to assist with the purchase of books or the payment of college fees, they are often unwilling to do so and ultimately will try to discourage her from continuing her education. One respondent explained that she came from a family of 9, of which 7 are female. The female members of the family are forced to engage in agricultural work and requests of financial assistance towards education are not entertained. According to Suma Chitnis (1981), the impact of restricted access to education of girls is very obvious; the disparity between girls and boys is striking.

### **Cultural Factors: Child Marriage**

The cultural conditions of the student's family also have an impact upon attitudes towards education amongst Dalit girls. Most of the respondents who got married at an early age described receiving negative comments from other villagers and feeling uneasy about continuing their studies. One respondent said that some of the villagers used to make negative comments about her continuing to go to college after her marriage, such as 'What is the need of studying after marriage? She can stay at home and

look after her family'. Another respondent said that a group of boys harassed her verbally about continuing to attend college after her marriage. The effect of these comments was that the respondents in question decided not to continue their education.

Karuna Chanana (2001) in her study found that higher education has become an instrument of filling the gap between schooling and marriage. In urban areas, in recent years, the age at which girls marry has risen; this is not the case in rural areas. There exists a certain interval of time between a girl finishing her schooling and being married off, and unfortunately it is often the case that harassment and derogatory comments by other village members during this period are effective in discouraging girls from continuing their education.

The educational atmosphere within the family also plays a crucial role in whether girls decide to undertake higher studies. Since the majority of these students are the first generation to receive full-time education, they often do not receive the support they need to encourage them to study and partake academically. Most Dalits in the villages are uneducated and work as agricultural labourers for a daily wage. It was observed that a significant proportion of the Dalit community spends a considerable part of their earnings on alcohol. This has social implications for the Dalit community, not least family unrest due to wife battering and alcohol-fuelled arguments. Such atmospheres at home are not conducive to the education of Dalit children.

Sharing the domestic space is another issue faced by Dalit households. Despite the average family size being 5, the average house consists of just two small rooms and hardly provides a peaceful and conducive atmosphere for youngsters in education.

### **Lack of encouragement and guidance**

Education is a goal-directed activity; the person who is seeking higher education needs encouragement and guidance from their parents, elders and teachers. These people serve as motivating agents and their advice and decisions are often instrumental in encouraging the educational career and aspirations of the younger generation. This study found that 34 of the 60 respondents did not receive any sort of guidance from their elders, teachers or parents, and as a result, they had taken their own decisions regarding their studies. The remaining 26 respondents did receive guidance from

their elders, teachers and parents regarding their education. As M. Showeb (1986) observes, Dalit students are gradually breaking free from the hold their families have traditionally had upon them, and are now displaying individualism in defining as well as achieving their goals in life.

### **Parent's perception of girl's education**

Turning now to the perception of parents in the Dalit community of their children's education, the responses to the researcher's questions are illuminating. It was found that 39 (65%) of the family members made the effort to enable their daughters to continue in education whereas 21 (35%) did not. The majority of respondents said that they were comfortable with their daughters accessing education up to 10<sup>th</sup> standard, but beyond that point, affordability of education became a matter of concern.

Dowries and the selection of bridegrooms enter the picture at the time of intermediate and degree education. Parents are often seen to prefer to spend money on their daughter's wedding than her education. One respondent told the researcher that, although they would have liked to educate their children like those of the upper castes, being financially weak means that supporting their daughter's education is difficult.

The preceding analysis demonstrates the popular perception shared by parents towards the education of girls. For example, one respondent said that he works as a labourer for an upper caste family. These people managed to persuade him to withdraw his daughter from further studies by convincing him that educating her was a waste of his money.

Understanding and communicating the benefits of education amongst parents is hampered by illiteracy, a lack of consciousness and a lack of awareness, and these can negatively impact a girl's chances at completing her education. One respondent told the researcher that they could not see the advantage of educating their daughter, and as a result withdrew her from school. One parent revealed that her daughter used to enjoy studying but as a result of the influence of relatives and neighbours, she decided to stop her daughter from attending school. However, when one of her relatives secured a job, she was re-convinced of the importance of education. As a result, she is now determined not to stop her younger daughter's education and is willing to extend support to her in all aspects of her higher education.

Some of the respondents tried to reason that, instead of educating girls, it is better to invest in boys' education, since when girls get married, they go to live in their husband's house, whereas boys remain with their parents and take care of their family. Some of the respondents said that although they encourage their children to study, their children took the decision themselves not to complete their exams and continue their studies. Some of the respondents were marginal farmers and tenants who said that their status meant that all of their family members had to work in the field; this included their daughter, who was unable to continue her education as a result.

Due to the gender bias which exists within the family, male children are given priority over female children; this is very much evident among the Dalit community. Another factor which affects the education of girls is the dowry system. Parents find it difficult to arrange a suitable match for their daughter if she is educated, since a highly-qualified girl requires a highly-qualified match, which means paying a large dowry. This is an unimaginable expense for poor parents, and due to the growing emphasis on dowries, most parents try to dissuade their daughters from continuing their education and achieving high qualifications.

### **Lack of awareness amongst Dalit parents**

It is found that due to a lack of educational awareness amongst their family members, students receive limited guidance with respect to pursuing further studies. After completion of secondary education, students often do not know which college to join and which course they should take. If their parents are educated and have a degree of awareness regarding education, they are able to motivate their children to pursue higher education and assist them in the selection of courses. Unfortunately, many family members do not know the value of education and as a result do not attempt to have any input in their children's education.

This leads to difficulties for students from uneducated backgrounds in explaining their studies and trying to justify the expenditure needed for their education. Karuna Chanana (2001) in her study finds that education of boys is given priority over that of girls; financial resources are usually directed to the education of sons, to the almost complete exclusion of the education of the daughters.



### **Student's perception on dropout**

Education is an inherent force for good and accessibility towards education is a birthright. It is important, therefore, to understand the reasons why increasing numbers drop out from school and college. The majority of the respondents are from intermediate and graduation. A large majority of the respondents questioned (54 out of the 60–90%) said that girl's age was one of the major constraints for education. As soon as a girl attains puberty, parents search for alliance. This is compounded by difficult economic conditions and a lack of support from family members, which force girls to end their education, against their own best wishes. This may lead to not availing the government facilities. The atmosphere of the village is hardly intellectually stimulating; girls are surrounded by those who are illiterate, they don't spend their time doing productive work, and community support and encouragement is absent.

Some of the respondents said that they recognised the importance of education, and moreover that through education, they would be able to alter their social position and status. However, due to multiple socio-cultural, economic and policy factors, the respondents were discouraged from continuing on to higher education. Only 6 (10%) respondents said that personal problems were the reason behind them deciding not to pursue higher education. Interestingly, they claimed to be confident that engaging in agricultural labour would be more beneficial to them than continuing their education.

### **Non-availability of Government Colleges**

State policies and programmes have been ineffective in implementing educational guidelines and enabling education for all. Indeed, in the Mandal chosen for this study, the state government has failed to develop collegiate education, thus preventing students from accessing higher education. Those who have been worst affected by this failure have been underprivileged groups. It is the private educational players who are the major beneficiaries of the state policies. Collegiate education in Andhra Pradesh has become very weak in the wake of globalisation and its importance is declining due to the social and political interest of the Andhra Society.

Due to the impact of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, the state can be seen to be implementing policies which work against the

welfare of the student community. Private educational institutions number many more than government colleges and some government colleges have been closed due to insufficient staff and student numbers. There are no remaining full time contracts for staff in those government colleges; the staff are instead engaged on a part-time, 'supply' basis. This structure has major implications for educational standards; pass rates are low and these colleges fail to attract students of an average quality.

Through field research conducted for this study, it was found that, due to a lack of government junior and degree colleges in the Mandal, most financially-disadvantaged students are not in a position to study at the intermediate and degree level. Those students who complete their intermediate level have to pursue their collegiate education at institutions based at a great distance from them, often at great expense.

It is clear that if the government established more colleges itself, all students –irrespective of their class and caste backgrounds– would have the opportunity to access free education. However, since there are no such colleges, most students are forced to pursue their education in private colleges and pay the fees through a combination of scholarships and their own money. Due to the large fees charged by private colleges, parents often find it difficult to pay them within the specified time period.

According to Karuna Chanana (2001), educational inequality manifests itself through access to particular types of educational institutions. For example, certain institutions which enjoy a name for themselves through their excellent academic record, high quality of teaching, outstanding facilities and provision for extracurricular activities may draw students from different strata, despite there being no difference in the fees charged. Indeed, students themselves may show a preference towards certain institutions on the basis of their family status.

### **Transport facility**

Infrastructure such as transport and energy sources plays a crucial role in shaping the development of society. The transport options available in rural areas are of critical importance to the accessibility of the educational system. This is even more critical in the case of female students, whose mobility and movements are scrutinized by both their family and society as a whole. The effect of this issue is that there is a much higher drop-out

rate at intermediate and degree level of girls and boys. In rural villages, students of both genders suffer from the lack of transport.

**Table 4.1: Details of the transport available to students**

Transport				Total
		Yes	No	
Type of transport	Bus	2 (4.17 %)	46 (95.83. %)	48 (80%)
	Auto	7 (58.33%)	5 (41.67%)	12(20%)
Total		9 (15%)	51 (85%)	60 (100%)

Source: Field Study

From the above table it can be understood that although students may have access to transport, the times at which it runs may not be conducive to arriving at college in time. Only two of the respondents' buses got them to college in time; the other 46 (95.83%) respondents' buses did not. The total number of respondents who found transport which took them to college in time was 9 (15%), leaving 51 (85%) of respondents whose transport failed to do so. Some of the respondents told the researcher that their college day starts at 12 noon, and that they were unable to find transport which enabled them to reach there in time. Due to the suitable college timings students found it difficult to reach the college in time.

**Table 4.2: Details of the distance of colleges to the villages**

Distance of college from villages					Total
		11–20 Km	21–30 Km	Above 31 Km	
Do you have transport facility	Yes	6 (25%)	18(75%)	—	24(40%)
	No	7 (19.44%)	25 (69.45%)	4 (11.11%)	36(60%)
Total		13 (21.66%)	43 (71.68%)	4 (6.66%)	60(100%)

Source: Field Study

The above table details the distances travelled by the respondents in order to reach the two colleges in this study. 6 (25%) of the respondents have to travel between 11–20 kilometres and 18 (75%) have to travel 21–30 kilometres; 24 (40%) respondents have access to transport.

7 (19.44%) of the respondents travel between 11–20 kilometres; 25 (69.45%) travel between 21–30 kilometres and the 4 (11.11%) who travel above 31 kilometres said that they did not have access to any type of transport. The total number of respondents who don't have any type of transport is 36 (60%). Ultimately, the table demonstrates that the majority of the respondents do not have transport, which suggests that the available transport services do not correspond effectively with college timings.

Some respondents said that their children were eager to continue their education but this was made impossible by the lack of transport between their village and the college.

### **Lack of residential colleges**

Residential colleges provide students with a quality education, in an atmosphere conducive to study. Although the government runs two residential colleges for SC girls at intermediate level, there is not a single residential college at degree level. Field research demonstrated that the lack of residential colleges hampers the educational achievements of Dalit women.

Those respondents who studied in social welfare residential Junior colleges until intermediate level were unable to continue their education as day scholars at graduation level. It is thought that if these students were able to attend residential degree colleges, they would have been able to continue their studies and graduate. Most of the respondents felt that residential colleges provide quality education and a positive study environment, particularly in comparison to their own homes.

### **Failure at intermediate level**

Those students who studied in the government junior colleges were unable to perform well and failed to pass all of their subjects. The poor quality of education at high school level has a negative influence on the educational progress of students. A combination of factors results in a poor quality of education, including a lack of permanent staff at the intermediate level and

poor lab facilities. These factors result in the majority of students who enrol for the intermediate level failing to pass the first year. This destroys the confidence they hold in their own abilities and they become targets of ridicule from not only their peer group but also their family members. Understandably, this chain of events is effective in demoralizing the student and discouraging them from continuing further studies.

Some of the respondents said that their failure at intermediate first year resulted in them discontinuing their studies. One of the respondents said the poor quality of teaching resulted in failure in some subjects. It was found that most of the students found difficulties with subjects such as English, Maths, Physics and Chemistry. B. K Anita (2000) in her study found that the importance of education and quality of education are important in the colleges for the success of the student.

### **Lack of Interest in Studies**

Field research showed that 6 (10%) of the 60 respondents dropped out at intermediate level due to a lack of interest in their studies. It is interesting to note that these students did not suffer from financial difficulties; indeed, in comparison to other Dalits, they were well established. They failed to go to college regularly and did not pay their exam fees, and their parents did not comment on their children showing disinterest in their studies. These students are now engaged in agricultural work. In his study, Sengupta (2000) also found that students dropped out due to a lack of interest in their studies.

### **Health problems**

It has been found that some of the respondents dropped out due to ill health. Severe health problems such as malaria, fever and jaundice meant that these students were not in a position to attend college regularly. Some of the respondents were under bed rest during the examination period, and as a result did not attend their exams. Some of the respondents who suffered from ill health explained that they did not receive a proper diet at home, and were not in a position to receive treatment in a private hospital.

### **Violence against women**

In rural areas, different forms of violence against women are on the increase, and for college-going females and their parents, this creates

significant problems. College-going women are targets of sexual harassment and abuse, known locally as ‘eve teasing’, consisting of molestation on buses, and even murder, both inside and outside their colleges. The psychological fear these events engender causes parents to reconsider sending their daughters to educational institutions.

Most of the respondents said that the insecurity these actions cause means that they are no longer in a position to continue their education. Respondents testified to the problems created by poor transport links to and from college, particularly when the students have to return home late at night; in one instance, the researcher was told of a student who was raped. Occurrences of kidnap, rape and physical harassment are widespread and are successful in convincing many girls not to continue their education beyond a certain age.

One of the respondents said that due to security fears, he has not allowed his daughter to continue on to higher studies. An incident in which a female student from one of the villages in the Mandal was raped by an auto driver spread fear across the area and meant that many parents became worried about their children pursuing collegiate education. Pandey (1993), in his study on a school in greater Bombay, observed that female students shared a sense of insecurity and fear of sexual harassment with regard to their journey to and from school.

## **Ragging**

‘Ragging’ is a form of abuse which takes place in public places and is also inflicted upon newcomers to educational institutions. Although ragging is prohibited as a deviant behaviour within the four walls of the college, this form of behaviour, which includes obscene comments and teasing, persists in everyday student life. 36 (60%) of the respondents in this study said that they had faced ragging both in college and in their villages.

Some of the respondents said that boys subject them to sexist remarks and comments about their clothing and appearance during the bus journey to college. Some of the married respondents said that they had had to curtail their studies due to ragging. One respondent said that she had filed a formal complaint to the management as a result of the ragging she had suffered, but this had come to nothing. 24 (40%) of the respondents said

that ragging was a part of student life in college and a challenge that must simply be faced if they want to continue their education.

### **Summary**

The above findings demonstrate the extent to which girls are discriminated against, both in the family and by society. In families, it is traditional to give preference to sons over daughters, particularly with respect to education. This behaviour is prevalent within society as a whole, irrespective of caste. The principle reason behind the failure of a girl to complete her education is a lack of awareness of the benefits of education amongst the parents. This is compounded by several other factors including poor economic background, discouragement by the family members against continuing education, early marriage and insecurity caused by sexual harassment.





## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

This chapter aims to summarise the findings of this study. The starting point of this research was the observation that education is an important tool for the emancipation of human beings. Scholars such as John Dewey and Emile Durkheim viewed education as a means of social transformation and the source of individual and community emancipation. In the process of nation-building, the Indian national leadership gave critical importance to education. The Indian constitution declares primary education a fundamental right and instils the aim to provide free education to all children below the age of fourteen.

As a result of this, the literacy rate in India has increased steadily since independence. However, the issue of students deciding to drop out of education is not inconsiderable, and the dropout rate in Andhra Pradesh, the area chosen for examination in this study, is higher than the national average. The educational level of Andhra Pradesh is extremely low in comparison to other South Indian states. Dropout rates in Andhra Pradesh are also higher in primary and secondary schools and at intermediate and graduation level, particularly amongst students from rural areas, than in other South Indian states.

This study was conducted in Palakurty Mandal, which is in the district of Warangal. 60 respondents from different villages in the Mandal were selected, and interviews and group discussions were carried out in order to ascertain the reasons behind the high dropout rates amongst Dalit girls at a collegiate level.

The body of literature which was analysed through the course of this study tackled issues of gender and education of women, particularly amongst Dalit women, and the issue of students dropping out of education at the primary and secondary level. It was difficult to find literature which examined the experience of Dalit women in collegiate education, within the context of Andhra Pradesh. This study therefore was instrumental in

highlighting the critical role of collegiate education –the link between school and university education– and examining reasons behind the high dropout rate amongst Dalit women in collegiate education in the district of Warangal.

There are several factors which significantly influence the phenomena of Dalit women dropping out of collegiate education; these include the socio-cultural setting, the educational and economic background of the student's family, informational and infrastructural issues, as well as the politics of state policies. In combination, these factors are significant in determining the nature of enrolment, course selection and the degree of educational achievement of Dalit women.

The study found that caste discrimination persists in the villages, with most being seen to segregate Dalits through the practice of 'spatial isolation'. This action prevents any form of social interaction between Dalits and non-Dalit communities, and as a result the social networks and social capital among the Dalits are greatly reduced, and much less significant than those of other social groups and the dominant castes. Caste as an institutional mechanism both directly and indirectly supports social segregation, and has the catastrophic effect of discouraging the education of those belonging to the Dalit community, particularly Dalit women.

Child marriages are also a cause of higher dropout rates; a large proportion of the respondents got married at a very young age, while they were at school. Some of the respondents got married during the intermediate level, and were forced to discontinue their studies against their wishes by their husbands. They were also discouraged from continuing their education by their relatives. Child marriages are still extremely widespread in rural areas, and although efforts have been made to reduce the practice, for example through the help of NGOs, they have not been effective.

The social organization of Dalit families also influences the dropout levels of Dalit girls. In most of these families the gender bias is clearly evident, and girls are expected to engage in household tasks and agricultural work. The domestic situation of many of the girls chosen for this study was far from optimal; for example, a large number of the parents of the students are habitual alcohol users, to the detriment of family life. These factors are all conducive towards female Dalit students dropping out of their studies.

A large number of the students in this study were also found to suffer from financial problems, which mean that they are not in a position to pay their college fees and transport expenses or buy books. To ameliorate these difficulties, the students engage in agricultural work in order to earn money, but since this labour often takes place during the college day, it is paradoxically detrimental to their education. Economic difficulties often mean that parents force their children to work as labourers and discourage them from pursuing an education.

When the incomes of these families were examined, it was found that most depend on wages earned from agricultural labour; only a few families own their own land. Since the annual income of the parents of the girls studied does not exceed more than twenty thousand Rs, most Dalit families find it difficult to contribute money to fund their children's education. It was also found that most of the parents are illiterate; only a few were educated up to 5<sup>th</sup> standard and, as a result, they lack awareness about the importance of higher education.

The Mandal chosen for this study does not have a government college; students instead have to depend on private institutions for their collegiate education. It was found that those students who studied in government residential colleges had to curtail their studies due to the non-availability of degree colleges in the Mandal; those who want to pursue collegiate education have to travel between 25 and 35 kilometres.

The study found that the private colleges in the Mandal lack qualified staff and even basic facilities such as libraries, labs, running water, toilet facilities and playgrounds. This is despite the fact that the college managements demand large fees from students on the pretext of developmental fees for facilities such as libraries and labs.

The medium in which study is delivered also plays a crucial role in shaping the educational success of students. The students who dropped out of the colleges in this study were mainly Telugu-speakers. Most of them were day scholars and only five had studied in social welfare residential schools and colleges. While some students opted for the science group at intermediate level, 55% opted for the arts group.

It is thought that those students who dropped out of college were not fully aware of the importance of their studies, and that this was partly as a result of their parents' lack of awareness of the importance of education, and the

fact that they consequently did not receive encouragement or guidance from their elders after completion of high school. This unfortunately meant that they took the decision to continue on to college themselves, and chose unsuitable and expensive subjects to study as a result.

The study also found that some of those who dropped out of education were physically challenged. These students said that they would have been willing to continue their studies if they were provided with free education and accommodation in a hostel near to their college. Other students curtailed their education due to ill health, which they were unable to seek treatment for due to financial constraints.

Another significant factor which was found to influence the dropout rates of Dalit women from collegiate education was the quality and provision of transport to and from college. Most of the students in this study have to travel around 30 kilometres from their village to reach college, and the schedule of the state-run bus service is poorly aligned with that of the college day. As a result, most of the students have to depend on private forms of transport in order to reach their respective colleges. This costs between 20 and 30 rupees per day, an amount which is difficult for these students to afford.

Most female students are afraid to make this journey due to the different forms of violence and sexual harassment they experience. When one student was raped by an auto driver on her journey back from college, many parents in the Mandal decided to prevent their daughters from continuing their education.

In conclusion, many factors influence the educational aspirations and social mobility of Dalit females, not least patriarchal attitudes, gender bias, both within the domestic and public sphere, and child marriage. In addition to the socio-cultural and economic dimension of the Dalit family as an entity, the Indian state as an institutional agency has failed to a large extent in widening the educational opportunities of its population, particularly the Dalit community. The failure of the state to expand education and raise educational standards has led to higher dropout rates amongst the most under-privileged sections of the society, including Dalit women. The researcher therefore proposes that the state take significant action in order to improve the provision of education, through providing residential accommodation, improving transport to and from educational establishments, generating awareness amongst parents of the benefits of

education, providing adequate health care, and creating a safe and secure social environment in and around the college environment. If such measures are taken, it is thought that there will be a major improvement in both the enrolment and retention of Dalit girls at different levels of collegiate education.

With this in mind, the researcher would like to propose a number of remedial measures which could be employed to strengthen collegiate education and widen educational access to all students, particularly those from marginalised sections of society:

- Government officials should take the initiative to implement new policies to reduce the dropout rate.
- Every Mandal should be given at least one government Junior and Degree College.
- In every Mandal there should be at least two residential colleges for girls at intermediate level and one residential college at degree level, so that students feel free to study.
- Teachers should motivate their students to continue on to higher studies.
- It should be recognised that the participation of stakeholders, including students, parents and representatives of elected bodies is essential if higher levels of enrolment and retention at different stages of education are to be reached.



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# QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Age 16-20 -1 21-24 -2 25-28 -3
2. Marital status  
Married-1 Unmarried-2
3. Study of primary and higher education  
Rural-1 Urban-2
4. Medium of instruction  
Telugu-1 Hindi-2 English-3
5. Division secured in SSC  
First-1 Second-2 Third-3
6. Study place at intermediate level  
Rural-1 Urban-2
7. Group obtained at intermediate level  
MPC-1 BPC-2 CEC-3 HEC-4  
MEC-5
8. Medium of instruction at intermediate level  
Telugu-1 Hindi-2 English-3
9. Division secured at intermediate level  
First-1 Second-2 third-3 failed-4
10. Place of degree education  
Rural-1 Urban-2
11. Medium of instruction at degree level  
Telugu-1 Hindi-2 English-3
12. Division secured at degree level  
First-1 Second-2 third-3 Failed-4
13. Do you like your studies?  
Yes-1, No-2
14. Do the teachers teach at the college on a regular basis?  
Yes-1 No-2
15. Do the teachers teach properly in the college?  
Yes-1 No-2
16. At which level did you drop out?  
Inter-1 Degree-2 PG-3
17. Do you have academic relations with your teacher in college?  
Yes-1 No-2

18. Did you face caste discrimination in the village?  
Yes-1                      No-2
19. What is your parent's occupation?  
Agriculture labour-1                      Employ-2  
Daily labour-3
20. What are your family assets?  
Land-1                      Landless-2
21. What is your family income?  
0-10000-1                      11000-20000-2                      above 21000-3
22. What is your expenditure on education?  
0-10000-1                      11000-15000-2                      above 16000-3
23. Did your parents make any effort to know about your studies?  
Yes-1                      No-2
24. Did your parents feel that your education has damaged your marriage prospects?  
Yes-1                      No-2
25. Do your parents allow you to study with your friends?  
Yes-1                      No-2
26. Do you have transport facility to your village?  
Yes-1                      No-2
27. Do your college have a library?  
Yes-1                      No-2
28. What was the response from the other caste people when you were going to college?  
Very good-1                      Good-1                      Can't say -3
29. Do your friends who belong to other castes visit your house?  
Yes-1                      No-2
30. Did boys ever make comments about your during your journey to college?  
Yes-1                      No-2
31. With regards to your studies, did you receive any guidance from your college friends?  
Yes-1                      No-2
32. Have you witnessed caste discrimination within your community/village?  
Yes-1                      No-2
33. How would you describe the atmosphere within your village/educational environment?  
Very good-1                      Good-2                      Bad-3
34. Do your teachers conduct assignments and unit tests regularly?  
Yes-1                      No-2

35. Do you face any difficulties with your subjects?  
Yes-1 No-2
36. Do you have a lab in your college?  
Yes-1 No-2
37. What is the distance between the college and your village?  
0-10Km-1 11-20Km-2 21-30Km-3  
31-40Km-4 above 41Km-5
38. Which type of transport do you use?  
Bus-1 Auto-2 Other Facilities-3
39. How many hours does it take to get from your village to the college?  
1 Hour-1 2 Hours-2 3 Hours-3 4 Hours  
above-4
40. Does your chosen form of transport get you to college in time?  
Yes-1 No-2
41. Did you face any problems when going to college?  
Yes-1 No-2
42. Did you have to stay in a hostel?  
Yes-1 No-2
43. Have you ever worked in a student organisation?  
Yes-1 No-2
44. Did you participate in the NSS Programme?  
Yes-1 No-2

### Open-ended questions

1. What were the major reasons for you discontinuing your studies?
2. Have you faced any family problems?
3. Have you faced any problems regarding your marriage?
4. Have you faced any financial problems?
5. What are the problems that you have faced in educational institutions at different levels of your education?
6. What are the problems that you have faced from the village community?
7. What is your opinion on the privatisation of education?

8. Have you faced any discrimination within your family or from your friends?
9. Have you faced any problems in college from your friends or teachers?
10. What are the problems you have faced during traveling to and from college?
11. Did you receive proper co-operation from your parents, friends, relatives and teachers?
12. Have you faced any language problems?
13. What are the primary factors which are responsible for individual and collective dropout rates of female students, particularly those from the Dalit community?